

PAS should focus on larger issues than hudud

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"Laws are good as those who implement them"

The debate on the planned implementation of hudud laws in Kelantan appears to be dividing the Pakatan Pakyat coalition and threatening the continued existence of the coalition itself. Although the leaders of Pakatan deny the rift the issue had caused there is undoubtedly some unease of the issue being brought up again by PAS and the provocation of those in BN.

It is good that Pakatan top leadership has given top priority to discuss and find an amicable solution to the hudud crisis before they go to the polls. The positive outcome of their top level meeting recently is a sign of increasing political maturity of the coalition from the time it came into existence three years ago. The outcome of the meeting shows that controversial and sensitive issues can be discussed in a mature and civil manner without disrupting their unity in many issues at hand.

In short the Pakatan leadership has shown that they can agree to disagree on certain issues at the same time being solidly united on their common goal to bring political change. This concept of 'agree to disagree' is the most important prerequisite for a true democracy.

Unfortunately it seems to be lacking in BN, which is the cause of dissatisfaction of many of the minor components partners of the ruling coalition. We are all too familiar with the misguided concept of "either you are with us or against us" which is detrimental to the democratic process.

We hope common sense and goodwill will continue to prevail at the top level of the Pakatan decision making process so that they will not allow their differences to be manipulated to divert the coalition from its path to Putrajaya. We also hope that the maturity at the top level will disseminate to the all levels of the three-party coalition partners so that suspicion of one another that can undermine their unity in purpose will soon fade off.

Their priority should be to unseat the BN first, which is not going to be an easy task and needs the concerted efforts of every member of the Pakatan. Once this is achieved and there is a peaceful transition of power then Pakatan can sit down together to plan how to rule the country in favour of the people not themselves.

At this crucial stage when Pakatan seems to be able to successfully ward off all sorts of assault by their mighty opponent, it is of utmost importance that they should not allow any of their differences to be capitalised by the BN and the heavily lopsided media.

Laws are there to protect the rights and dignity of the people from all forms of harm like crime, cheating and injustice. Laws are essential but by themselves are useless as they are only as good as the people implementing them. While good laws are important but more important are the type of leaders we have who would be tasked to implement them.

If we have a government that respects the democratic rights of the people it will implement all the laws in a fair and just manner, doesn't matter hudud or secular. The people should not fear the laws however draconian they may be because a responsible government will never abuse such laws like the abuse of the ISA .

There is no absolute need to push for hudud laws at this stage. In fact it is morally wrong to impose one's laws onto others without their consent. However if it is what the majority of the people want the government of the day must give in to the wishes of the people. In this respect only a referendum can

decide what the majority want and the government should not hesitate to conduct one to decide the future course of the nation.

Why does PAS keep insisting on the hudud laws when it knows very well the country is not ready and even their own allies will oppose it? It is also clear that the federal constitution needs to be amended for the adoption of hudud laws and PAS knows that it will not get the two-thirds majority in Parliament. Yet it keeps bringing it up over and over again and DAP keeps opposing it all the time which gives ammunition to the BN to create confusion among the voters.

No laws are perfect, either the present secular one or the hudud. Both can be abused to bring injustice to the people. Can PAS give the assurance that the hudud laws if implemented will not be abused by those in power as many existing repressive laws are being abused now?

To my mind the people should not be fearful of any laws but be wise to elect the right people to implement them fairly and justly to all citizens without fear, favour or political motive.

It will be unwise to have two sets of laws; one for Muslims (hudud) and one for non-Muslims (common law) in an ethnically diverse country like Malaysia. Ideally we must have the same set of laws for all citizens regardless of race or creed as having different sets for different groups will only increase the existing ethnic and religious divide among the multiracial and multi-religious population.

It is unfortunate that the issue of hudud laws is being highly politicised and the various parties keep bring it up over and over again to get political mileage. This is not only unnecessary but dangerous in a country where the inter-ethnic relation is in a delicate balance.

Let us not argue, quarrel and get emotional over hudud and what other laws to implement but spend our time and energy to decide with great wisdom on who will be the right people and the right party that will implement our laws fairly without abusing them.

We have many pressing issues facing our country – the deteriorating economy, increasing racial and religious polarisation, poverty, rampant corruption, abuse of government machinery, escalating crime, and declining standard of education and morality among the youth.

Let us decide with greater discern who will be better poised to solve these pressing issues that will bring lasting peace, prosperity and progress for the people.