

## **Anwar: Hudud has no place in Pakatan policy**

**Malaysiakini.com**

**November 9, 2011**

**by Ng Ling Fong**

Though PAS is adamant about implementing hudud in Kelantan, PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim has reassured the Chinese community that the controversial law has no place in either the Pakatan Rakyat consensus or policy.

At a dialogue with more than 200 community leaders from some 65 Chinese associations and guilds in Subang Jaya last night, the opposition leader promised to convey the community's concerns on the matter to the Islamic party.

Anwar reiterated that Pakatan worked on the basis that any decision must it makes have the consensus of all three component parties and be in accordance with the federal constitution, or else it will not be implemented.

"When people ask about my stance on hudud, I tell them that PKR and Pakatan's stance is to support the constitution.

"But when people ask my personal stance as a Muslim, this is a tricky question. If you answer 'no', then you are dead. But if you answer 'yes', then tomorrow's New Straits Times headline will be 'Anwar supports hudud law'," he said.

As a Muslim, the Permatang Pauh MP said, he accepted the Quran, which stipulates hudud. But its implementation and Pakatan's consensus on it are separate issues.

Responding to a comment from the floor that PAS leaders should understand that hudud remains a concern of the community, Anwar said he would convey the message to PAS spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat at Pakatan's meeting to be held later today.

Anwar pointed out that just like the Chinese over remarks about Islam, the Malay-Muslim community was also worried about the comments made by some young DAP leaders.

MCA's fight for political survival has largely hinged on efforts to convince the Chinese electorate to abandon Pakatan as a protest against the PAS move to implement hudud, seen as the Islamic party's way of garnering the support of the more conservative Malay electorate on the east coast.

Economically sensible, politically insensible

Anwar also touched on the statement sensationalised by Malay dailies that Pakatan would trim down the one-million strong civil service should the coalition come into power.

"I have asked our leaders to make the correction that Pakatan will not disturb (the civil servants), because they are worried that they might be retrenched and unemployed if Pakatan takes over the federal government.

"Although, it makes a lot of economic sense, when it comes to politics, (it makes) no sense," said Anwar.

The charismatic orator also announced that the three-party coalition had also agreed that if it took over the federal administration, it would limit the prime minister's tenure to two terms and prohibit the premier from holding the post of finance minister as well.

Citing the examples of other countries, Anwar stressed that an overstaying premier would lead to many problems, because "the prime minister wants to become emperor".

The former deputy premier and finance minister also said he opposed the idea of a person holding the posts of both prime minister and finance minister, a practice started by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and continued by current Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"I was finance minister before. A finance minister is busy from morning to night. However, our prime ministers have been holding the post of finance minister as well since 1998, because they do not trust others - maybe it involves too many projects," he quipped.

Asked whether the premiership could be held by a Chinese, Anwar skirted the question, saying, "Is it a necessary question?"

"If I answer 'yes', it would become the headline in Utusan Malaysia; if I said 'no', it will become headlines in the Chinese dailies.

"So my answer is: the current consensus of Pakatan is that Anwar will be the next prime minister," added a smiling Anwar as the audience clapped in approval.

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