

**Non-Muslim Kelantanese unfazed by hudud**  
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In a Chinese community enclave in the bustling town of Kota Bharu, state capital of the country's conservative Muslim heartland of Kelantan, Mrs Gan, as she would like to be known, tends to her shoe store.

"We normally close by 6pm. At nightfall the streets outside are empty, and it's not safe out there," said Gan, as she wearily eyed customers setting foot into her store.

"Just early this year, the goldsmith's shop was robbed, which is why if hudud law is implemented, people will think twice before they commit robbery," she added, as she pointed across the street.

NONE Asked if punishments such as amputations would be too harsh, the Kelantanese said it would serve as a good deterrent.

"It does sound cruel, but if a snatch thief victim falls down and is badly hurt, it will affect the family deeply... it could be worse."

She dismissed other rules imposed by the PAS state government, such as the local council requiring female workers to wear long-sleeved shirts.

"I don't think it affects us much, even the Chinese here normally dress modestly, perhaps we are more conservative," she said, adding that the rule was not strictly enforced.

The young woman appeared taken aback when told that many non-Muslims in the west coast of the peninsula were opposed to hudud, the punishment for serious crimes in Islamic law or syariah.

"Sometimes I think the newspapers overplay this issue."

'Reality says differently'

A block away, dining in a chicken and 'char siew' (barbeque pork) rice shop was salesperson Hew Fook Choon, who concurred with Gan's view.

NONE Hew (right), who is originally from Perak and has lived in Terengganu and Kelantan for more than a decade, said he had been similarly fearful about living under PAS rule until he moved to Kota Baru and saw it for himself.

"Before I came to the east coast, this was always in the newspapers... but I've been living here for more than 10 years now. You still see pork being sold, you still see liquor being sold, don't you?"

He said the law only concerns Muslims and has nothing to do with non-Muslims. His native Kelantanese friend at the table, who only wanted to be known as Hong, nodded in agreement.

Asked about MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek's claim that hudud would impact even non-Muslims and that it would scare away foreign investors and hurt the economy, Hong

brushed it aside.

"What difference does it make? There is already not much development from the federal government here," he shrugged.

Asked about his choice if a referendum on hudud was held in Kelantan, Hong replied: "We can support it, we can reject it, it doesn't matter to us."

'No complaints from non-Muslims'

Speaking to Malaysiakini in Kota Bharu, state deputy executive councillor in charge of information, science and technology Ahmad Baihaki Atiqullah said there has not been strong opposition to hudud from the local non-Muslim community.

NONE"Thus far in Kelantan, we have not received any clear comment or complaints from non-Muslims, nor protest or letters opposing hudud. What we see instead are some Muslims opposing it," Ahmad Baihaki said.

He dismissed MCA's claim as politicking, reiterating that non-Muslims would not be affected by the law.

Contrary to what is said by the MCA, amputation is the maximum penalty for certain crimes and cannot be arbitrarily meted out.

"It depends on what is stolen, the situation in which something is stolen and where the stolen item is kept.

"Just like civil criminal law, where you determine how many years of jail or fine as punishment, amputation is the maximum penalty under hudud," Ahmad Baihaki said.

Ultimately, he said, the spirit of hudud is to deter crimes and repeat offenders.

The Kelantan Hudud Enactment was passed by the PAS state government in 1993, but it has not been enforced as law because an amendment to the federal constitution is required.

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