

Anwar behind bars is a good thing, says activist
MalaysiaKini.com
May 6, 2014

Prominent activist Hishamuddin Rais will not cringe in sorrow if Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim is incarcerated again on his Sodomy II conviction.

Speaking at a forum last night, Anwar's junior at both the Malay College of Kuala Kangsar and Universiti Malaya, said he would be nothing short of "happy" if that happened.

According to him, Anwar's return to jail would spark off a new uprising.

"I will be happy if Anwar goes to jail, it is a good thing, then we can instigate people to go back to the streets," Hishamuddin said.

Anwar's first imprisonment in 1998 was the impetus for the Reformasi movement and caused a setback in the 1999 general election for BN, which lost the administration of Terengganu state as well as Kelantan.

Hishamuddin also said he would be glad to see PAS split over the hudud controversy.

"This purification is a normal process in a political party. This will split the group in PAS which is obsessed with the idea of a unity government with Umno.

"This is because when they scrub their green attire, they can't look past their Malay blood," said the outspoken veteran activist, who is already facing sedition charges over remarks made at a post-GE forum last year.

However, Harakah chief editor Ahmad Lutfi Othman and Rocketkini editor Wan Hamidi Wan Hamid (right) both cast doubts as to whether there would be a new political tsunami in time for the 14th general election, judging by the pattern of things.

"I am ashamed that the Malays are still allowing themselves to be influenced by media such as Utusan Malaysia and TV3.

"The Malays treat politics as though it is religion. They find it so difficult to switch from Umno to PAS.

"They do not realise the role of civil society, you see this has grown in other communities, but Malays still have not realised the role of civil society," Ahmad Lufti added.

Wan Hamidi, a DAP member, said he was "pessimistic" over change in GE14, citing Pakatan Rakyat's inability to make inroads in areas where they had lost votes in the last general

election.

"We did not win votes in the rural areas, which is the Malay and bumiputera heartland," he said.

"But sadly, it has been one year since the elections and Pakatan still has not made inroads there. Instead, the parties are busy fighting one another - be it about water or hudud," Wan Hamidi added.

Islamic symbolism

DAP's Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong said if there is to be a tsunami in the next election, it would happen due to economic factors.

Liew also noted that issues such as hudud never cropped up in the national discourse before the 1980s.

"Hudud never cropped up before Dr Mahathir Mohamad became the prime minister.

"When Mahathir took over, he absorbed Islamic symbolism into his administration, and this caused PAS, which was fighting with Umno over Malay welfare up until then, to become even more Islamic in order to counter Umno. So this is a politics of symbolism," he said.

"The question is: is this kind of politics still relevant today? We can come out of symbolic politics and start discussing context instead," Liew added.

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