

Hudud portends bad news for DAP in coming polls
MalaysiaKini.com
May 9, 2014

ANALYSIS For the DAP, which feels obliged to retain its parliamentary seats in Bukit Gelugor and Teluk Intan in the two by-elections this month, the exacerbation of the debate over hudud is portending some worse things to come for the party.

While Bukit Gelugor and Teluk Intan are Chinese-majority constituencies, comprising 75 percent and 42 percent of Chinese voters respectively, the controversy over hudud is expected to be “trump card” for DAP's rivals, given that mudslinging occurs widely during elections.

DAP will be facing MCA in Bukit Gelugor and Gerakan in Teluk Intan.

Should the two Chinese-dominant parties of the BN attack DAP by playing up on hudud, there is no chance for the country's biggest opposition party to avoid addressing several questions, such as how to stop the implementation of hudud, and to resolve the fissure between Pakatan and PAS in particular.

Working closely together among the Pakatan component parties DAP, PKR and PAS is crucial for the mixed seat of Teluk Intan, which comprises 38 percent Malay voters, as DAP will need the assistance of PAS to penetrate those areas.

‘DAP has failed to protect the Chinese’

Penang MCA's deputy chairperson Tan Teik Cheng is of the opinion that the Bukit Gelugor by-election is the opportunity for MCA to tell the Chinese that “DAP has failed to protect the Chinese” and that “PAS is beyond DAP's control”.

“PAS insists on tabling a Private Member's Bill on hudud in Parliament, but DAP can't do anything about this... the Chinese must see this clearly,” Tan (right) told Malaysiakini when contacted.

He said MCA leaders would go all out to tell the Chinese how DAP “betrays” the community by asking them to support PAS that proposed hudud bill which is pervasive to non-Muslim.

However, the late incumbent MP Karpal Singh's thumping victory with a majority of more than 42,000 votes in the 2013 general election could well indicate that MCA only has a slim chance of taking the tiger's den.

The intense debate on hudud took on another angle when Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom told Parliament on March 27 that Putrajaya was willing to

assist the PAS-led Kelantan government to implement hudud.

After Kelantan government gave positive response by proposing the tabling of a Private Member's Bill in the forthcoming session of Parliament, it went on to form a joint technical task force with the federal government to push for hudud.

DAP must explain the 'mess' to the people

In Perak, the state DAP secretary Wong Kah Woh said the urgent task for the party leaders now was to explain to the Chinese constituents that Umno was the one that initiated the mess.

"We need to explain to the voters, once again, that DAP is against hudud, and they need to know Umno is the first that challenged PAS (to table the hudud Bill)," said Wong (right), who is the Canning assemblyperson.

As for by-election strategy, he reminded Pakatan leaders not to follow the tones set by BN, but to keep highlighting issues of corruption, the much criticised goods and services tax and the country's education system.

Despite urgings from several top DAP leaders for PAS to quit Pakatan if did not back down on its theocratic goals, some Pakatan leaders maintained that the allies remained cooperative with one another.

Perak PAS deputy chairperson Nizar Jamaluddin told Malaysiakini that his party would "do its level best" in the campaign for the Teluk Intan seat.

"Umno tries to split us (Pakatan), but look, the revolts from non-Muslim parties in BN, like MCA and Gerakan, and the Christian leaders in East Malaysia, are greater than (opposition to hudud from) DAP and PKR... there is no rift within Pakatan," Nizar said.

The former Perak menteri besar pointed out that the voters in semi-urban Teluk Intan were concerned about local issues, rather than hudud.

Meanwhile, PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu said hudud "is far from the implementation stage" and this would not bring any negative impact upon the DAP in the coming by-elections.

"Hudud remains at the discussion stage so far, without any concrete outcome... PAS will go all out to campaign," said Mat Sabu, who is also Penang PAS commissioner.

'Hudud not a key issue in mixed seats'

However, Gerakan remains cautious about using the hudud issue as one of its weapons in the Teluk Intan campaign.

This is due to considerations to ensure that the 38 percent of the Malay voters in the mixed seat are not offended by Gerakan's aggressive objection against the Islamic penal system, as this may result in a possible loss of Malay votes.

To this, Teluk Intan Gerakan division acting chairperson Choo Weng Kee said the party should note that the Changkat Jong state seat under Teluk Intan is a Malay-majority area.

“We must explain to the Malays mildly. We are not anti-Islam by being against hudud, but that such a system is not suitable in Malaysian context,” Choo said.

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Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/262332>