

PM's stand on hudud remains elusive

MalaysiaKini.com

Mar 23, 2015

By Andrew Ong

The much anticipated statement from Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak on plans to implement hudud law in Kelantan has yet to surface, five days after he heard objections to the matter from BN component party leaders.

Last Thursday, Najib met leaders of 12 BN component parties after the Kelantan state assembly passed a bill to amend the Kelantan Syariah Criminal Code II Enactment 1993.

According to sources familiar with the "emergency meeting" requested by the party leaders, the component parties expressed their objection on grounds that introducing hudud in Malaysia was against the Federal Constitution, to which Najib promised to issue a statement on Saturday to clarify matters.

MCA president Liow Tiong Lai had said after the meeting that the prime minister would make his stand known the next day.

News reports following the cabinet meeting on Friday also indicated that Najib was supposed to have issued a statement after hearing objections from his ministers.

However, the Prime Minister's Office has until now remained ambivalent on the Kelantan government's hudud aim which could potentially alter the course of Malaysia's criminal justice system.

Umno's position unclear

When the vote was called at the Kelantan state assembly on Thursday, the amendments to the Syariah Criminal Code II Enactment 1993 was passed with the support of 12 state assemblypersons from Umno.

It is unclear if the actions of the 12 reflected that of Umno and its president, although several second tier party leaders have expressed an inclination towards implementing hudud law.

However, Umno vice-president Shafie Apdal claimed that party ministers had agreed with the 12.

Immediately after the amendments were passed, PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang, as the MP of Marang, notified the Dewan Rakyat speaker that he seeks to table a Private Member's Bill to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965.

This law currently limits punishments imposed by the syariah court to no more than three years imprisonment, a fine of up to RM5,000 and six strokes of the rotan for certain

offences.

Removing the limits would allow the syariah court to mete out punishments according to Kelantan's hudud legislation, which among others, includes stoning to death and crucifixion.

Game of chicken

Analyst have opined that the premier is, unwittingly or by design, now engaged in a high stakes game of chicken with PAS.

PAS seems bent on holding its course with the hope of endearing itself to conservative Muslims, but Umno's end game appears to be directed at causing a split in Pakatan Rakyat.

Currently, fissures in Pakatan are already widening, with DAP leaders repeatedly lobbing salvos at PAS for breaching the coalition's common policy framework.

The latest attack saw DAP publicising minutes of a Pakatan meeting in February where Hadi had promised to show the coalition the private member's bill before bringing it to Parliament.

Despite the urgency expressed by the BN component parties, watching the escalating intra-Pakatan feud is perhaps why Najib can afford to remain silent on the matter for a little longer.