

As enemy crumbles, Najib delays hudud stand

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On Feb 10, the Prime Minister's Office broke a record of sorts when it swiftly issued a statement on the Federal Court's decision to uphold Anwar Ibrahim's conviction, even before sentencing.

But six days after PAS moved one step closer towards its theocratic goal of implementing hudud, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has remained silent over how his administration or the ruling party view the matter.

This was despite him promising 12 BN component party leaders during an emergency meeting last Thursday, where he heard their objections towards hudud laws on grounds that it was unconstitutional, that his position on the matter would be made public in a few days.

Political analysts Wan Saiful Wan Jan believes the delay is intentional as keeping quiet meant that Najib could avoid the spotlight, which is now on the spat between DAP and PAS.

"It is a clever strategy. The PM is letting the enemy crumble," he told Malaysiakini.

Wan Saiful noted that Umno has been treading carefully on the matter, avoiding public attention to the fact that the party was the one that aggressively goaded PAS to implement hudud law since late 2013.

A way out for PM

In the latest development, DAP declared that it would sever ties with PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang on grounds that he had breached Pakatan Rakyat's policies and had been dishonest on several occasions.

On whether keeping mum would affect Najib and Umno negatively, Wan Saiful said it was unlikely because those who would be irked are those in support of hudud, whom he believed to be a minority in Malaysia.

"There would be an adverse effect on the PM if the Umno supreme council and division leaders suddenly become very religious," he quipped.

While agreeing that Najib is now trapped between supporting the implementation of hudud law to shore up his Islamist credentials and maintaining the spirit of the federal constitution, Wan Saiful (left) believed that the best way forward for the prime minister is to allow BN MPs to vote on the matter according to their conscience.

"Then whatever the outcome, it cannot be blamed on the PM and Umno.

"The likelihood is that the proposal would be defeated in Parliament anyway," said Wan Saiful, who is the chief executive of Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Ideas).

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