

## **Is Najib caught in a bind over hudud?**

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**By Ram Anand**

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has been dragging his feet on the hudud bill, fueling speculation that BN is unable to reach a consensus on this issue, which is a quagmire for both the ruling and opposition coalitions.

This is a tightrope walk for the prime minister, who must balance between the Muslim sentiment and the demands of his coalition partners who represents non-Muslims.

There is also his international reputation as a moderate Muslim leader which must be taken into account.

Yesterday, Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin described it as a "delicate" issue when asked about the elusive stand.

"I think we want to ensure the final position of BN not only reflects the views within BN but also takes into consideration that the federal constitution is supreme and that Islam is the religion of the federation," he had said.

## **Has Umno decided on a stand?**

Today, Umno vice-president Hishammuddin Hussein, when quizzed on the matter, replied that the opposition should not shift the focus to BN.

Pointing out that hudud is divine law, the defence minister said: "The prime minister has mentioned before that it concerns implementation. Tunggulah (wait for the statement)."

According to Bernama, Hishammuddin also mocked Pakatan Rakyat as a "convenient" political pact which is now falling part due to the hudud issue.

Since the hudud issue erupted, Umno ministers and elected representatives have been offering mixed views, while it was also pointed out that the private member's bill would not be passed in Parliament due to the lack of numbers.

For example, Umno vice-president Shafie Apdal said the party's ministers agreed with the 12 Umno assemblypersons who voted in favour of the amendments in the Kelantan state assembly.

## **Statement ready?**

Meanwhile, Sin Chew Daily reported Gerakan president Mah Siew Keong of expressing confidence that Najib's statement would be issued "very soon".

"BN has 13 component parties, therefore the viewpoint of each party may be different. But I believe a statement would be released soon reflecting the stand of all component parties," he added.

SUPP president Sim Kui Hian, however, said that he inked the joint statement last Friday, a day after the component party leaders met with the prime minister.

On the other hand, MCA vice-president Chua Tee Yong denied that BN had problems reaching a consensus on the issue.

There are also those who feel that Najib is deliberately delaying the announcement in order for the opposition to crumble as a result of DAP and PAS crossing swords over hudud.

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