

PAS: Great strides made in explaining Islamic issues
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Although Pakatan Rakyat will not be confronting 'sensitive issues' in its national convention this Sunday in Penang, the notion of hudud law and the Islamic state won't be going away - even more so with the general election widely expected in the next few months.

PAS, however, appears to be confident that it has managed to make great strides since 2004 to explain the substance behind the two contentious Islamic principles to non-Muslims.

penang pas penanti by-election 030509 mujahid yusuf rawaPakatan convention administrator Mujahid Yusuf Rawa (right) said since 2004, PAS managed to get the message across by not telling people what hudud is, but what justice means in Islam.

"It is not that hudud is bad, the issue has been exploited...it is not about chopping off hands, it is about giving charity to the people, making people understand their role, to provide a sound economy, to ensure that crime does not happen," said the Parit Buntar MP.

Mujahid, who is Penang PAS deputy commissioner, said that through the party's national unity movement which he heads, PAS has formed a small club for non-Muslims to join.

Based on Article 3 of the federal constitution that states that Islam is the official religion, he added, the party had ample opportunity to clarify the substance of an Islamic state.

"By substance, we mean: what is justice in Islam, what does it take to uphold justice? Justice also means what is the relationship between different faiths in Islam," he added.

"We managed to break the wall...so name it whatever you want: Islamic state or theocratic state...that's your problem, I believe people are more rational now to see (the substance of it)," he said.

mca protest pas hq on hudud 241208 01"The problem is, there is no model of an Islamic state... is it Saudi Arabia? Iran? If you ask me, we do not exactly have a model," he added.

"The Prophet did not give us a form, he gave us the substance, it could be a monarchy, republic, constitutional monarchy like us, it could be anything."

Mujahid said Islam was the main principle in PAS and it is not possible to ask party leaders or members not to mention the Islamic state.

"We are an Islamic party, how can you ask us not to say that? But we are also realistic, I cannot force people to accept my ideology if I come into power, but I must do whatever is in my capacity within the context of what is legal and constitutional to make you understand my ideology," he said.

"If you ask PAS and it says, 'Oh...we are not about an Islamic state,' then what is PAS? But PAS is very adaptive..." he added.

'No forced conversions'

On questions of conversion, Mujahid explained that PAS always propagates that Islam is fair for all, that there would be no force in the religion as that would be "illegal and sinful".

He said the relationship between different faiths must be cultivated where there would be freedom to share differing views with respect as long as they do not hurt one another.

"Our relationship is not just faith to faith but humanity; if you are not Muslim, does it mean I can do anything to you? But you are a human," he said.

"In the context of humanity, I must not just respect you but also what you believe and must allocate the structure and infrastructure you need to profess your faith," he added.

However, he said that the problem that arises from conversion issues is the sensitivities of the religion and the exploitation of certain quarters for their own political expediency.

He conceded that although there is freedom of religion in Islam, there are also rules and regulations its believers must comply with.

Mujahid said if people perceives the act (of prohibiting someone to leave Islam) as cruel, it cannot be helped as this is what Islam believes.

He urged others not to be angry with those who believe that leaving the Islamic faith is sinful as it is a sensitivity within the faith, adding that the problem usually lies more in the legal aspect of conversion.

"Even if you are a Buddhist or Christian, can you say that you can do whatever you want? Then what is the meaning of faith? Maybe you can (do as you wish) but then there is no point of having a faith," he said.

"So faith in Islam is a very serious matter, it is not a plaything where you can just throw it away...we say clearly that leaving the religion is not acceptable in Islam and it is haram," he added.