

Hassan on race-relations, Islamic state and pigs in S'gor
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Malays in Selangor will not be left out of the government's policies but this should not unduly worry the non-Malays in the state, said state exco member Hassan Ali.
MCPX

The non-Malays would be given equal opportunities to grow and develop in the most developed state in the country, assured the exco in charge of Islamic affairs, Malay customs, infrastructure and public amenities.

hassan ali interview 240408 01In a continuing series of interviews with all Selangor state exco, Malaysiakini spoke to the Gombak Setia state representative on various issues under his portfolio.

Apart from his assurance to be fair to all races in the state, Hassan, who is the Selangor PAS commissioner, also spoke about on his plans to improve the infrastructure in the state.

For this, he said, he would be drawing experience from his seven-year stay in the United States.

He also explained on the confusion surrounding PAS' Islamic state agenda and his views on the modern pig-farming issue.

Below is the excerpt from the interview:

Can you tell us the scope of duties under your portfolio?

I am in charge of Islamic affairs, Malay customs, infrastructure and public amenities.

For the Islamic affairs portfolio, I am in charge of Selangor Islamic Affair Department (JAIS), Selangor Islamic Affair Council (MAIS) and also Lembaga Zakat Selangor (LZS). These are the three main institutions which I'm entrusted with.

For the Malay customs portfolio, that has not been defined clearly but I know exactly what I want to do. I don't know yet what are the (statutory) bodies under me, but perhaps what I'm doing right now is to determine who are the people that can be gathered to put up something. Maybe we'll have a mini convention or seminar. For your information, this portfolio has not been there previously, so this is quite a new one.

And then, of course on the infrastructure, it's quite a major one. I'm supposed to be overseeing departments like Jabatan Pengairan dan Saliran (JPS), Jabatan Kerja Raya (JKR), Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB), Syabas and all those water related companies and organisations.

Apart from that one, maybe even the public toilets are under me (grinning).

Fortunately, I have quite wonderful people now working with me, either at the state or political level - those who have been appointed or elected and also the existing government departments and agencies' employees. They have been co-operating very well,

it's too far from what I have heard the experiences from some other states.

Do you see the stark contrast between your portfolios as a challenge?

Well, I think what I'm trying to do is to provide the bridge between the religion and infrastructure portfolios.

hassan ali interview 240408 02Some people would say that it's like the north and south pole. But I don't see it that way. Because, under the religion portfolios, there will be projects. JAIS, MAIS, LZS will have projects. So their projects are quite similar with the projects of other infrastructures.

And also, we should not be looking at religion as 'people going and coming out of the mosque'. Islam is a way of life. If you look from that perspective, in any infrastructure, water running system, the public transportation, there is the presence of Islam.

What are some of the issues among the Malay Muslims in Selangor?

Well, just like in any other states, the previous government, as far as the surau and the mosques are concerned, they controlled it in a way it has bred some kind of negativity in terms of people participating in administering the mosque and also for people to come in. So, the colour of Umno is obvious, it's very clear, people having position to run surau and mosques are from Umno. Therefore, it created latent and manifested chaos.

So in our administration, the situation will be different. I am asked to see that those impediments created by Umno are gradually taken out. So, I'm using my wisdom to see the things to be administered as professional, transparent, unbiased and as impartial as possible.

There maybe some changes in secretariats of surau and mosques. But we'll do it in a schematic way and also in an incremental manner. For those who are good, they will be maintained but for those who are trouble makers, perhaps they have got to make way for better persons.

What is the current state of Selangor's infrastructure and public amenities?

I would say, as far as the infrastructure is concerned, it's all covered. I don't think there are any villages in Selangor that have no basic infrastructures such as proper roads and bridges.

The question here is maintenance. How best can we maintain and improve the infrastructures? The infrastructures are there, but if the maintenance is poor, the infrastructures are going to be in poor condition. If it's a first class maintenance, then people will benefit from that.

Selangor has been declared a developed state, and therefore we must have a developed state of infrastructure. We are self-assured of that. So fortunately, I was given the opportunity to study in overseas, I was in the US for seven years. I saw how things are being run, how infrastructures been given emphasise by the local authorities and local government there. Maybe there are some good things we can copy, replicate and put it here. Some may not be conducive and relevant here but I guess majority of the examples can be put in our situation here.

Comparative to other states, we have got fairly good infrastructures. The maintenance has not been there on the mark, people would like to see better road, bridges, facilities. Given the trust, I would want Selangor to have good infrastructure but at the same time have good maintenance system.

From your point of view, why are the Malay Muslims highly sensitive towards the issue of pig farming whenever it's being brought up?

It's not only about religion but a cultural factor as well. As far as religion is concerned, as a Muslim, we should be adopting the attitude of respecting each other. Other people also have got their needs. Islam respects the needs of other people professing different religions other than Islam. Therefore, if I were to be seen from that angle, I think I would be giving the opportunity to the non-Muslims as well. They need pork, they eat pork. So why don't give them the opportunity to get pork, and apart from that, better facilities and amenities in pork production as well?

Secondly, as far as Islam is concerned, pig is forbidden. Our mufti has given a good explanation on that. Of course it is forbidden for the Muslim, but allowing other people to eat pork is not forbidden. To me, more or less, it is not only recommended, but also obligatory for the Muslim authority, like me here administering the state, to give the same good opportunity to the non-Muslims to enjoy whatever within the limitation of the broad moral and ethical character of this state.

anti pig protest selangor 090408 banners But from what I see, the Muslims didn't go overboard on this issue. The protest that we saw I suppose was being orchestrated by Umno in particular. So when we put to them that this was Umno's project and the Umno people are getting directly involved in this project, now I think the problem of pig rearing is no longer a big issue. If Umno was to keep pushing on this, I think they are the ones who have to shoulder the brunt, rather than us.

What are your views on the current debate on the social contract on the position of the Malays?

We have got to see the provision of the constitution (Article 153) regarding the rights of the Malays and the bumiputera. That has got to be preserved, unless, until it is taken out from the constitution. But I think, if the provision is there, therefore not only me, the rest of the 26 million of Malaysians must respect the constitution. Not only respecting, but to uphold and to see whatever being provided in the provision are to be taken into our daily lives. Our daily lives must reflect constitutional provisions.

Looking at the broader perspective, the Malays are still lagging behind in every aspects. Especially in urban states like Selangor here, in urban cities, very rarely you see Malays making headway in business and commercial areas.

I have got to support and to provide the necessary things that they need. And to advise and guide them in which they will slowly improve themselves, to be at par with their Chinese and Indian brothers in this country.

Sometimes, it is the political agenda. When we put in political agenda in constitutional provision, it will look a little ugly there.

I agree with helping the Malays in an expanding environment. You give an expanding pie, as the time goes by, the pie is getting bigger and bigger. So every one will get a larger piece of

pie. I'd prefer it that way.

And another thing I'd like to stress here in Selangor is to give equal opportunities on some situations between the Malays and the other races. Therefore, we have got to be more judicious in our words and deeds. We have to be more calculated in terms of the utterances, I suppose I am holding that view. I hope I'm being successful in giving the image whether it's PAS image or Pakatan Rakyat's image that we are Chinese-, Indian- and Malay-friendly. I think that is the kind of target that we are looking at.

When Pakatan Rakyat was set up, PAS decided not to continue with the Islamic state agenda. Why?

As far as PAS is concerned, Islamic state is all in the mind of PAS leaders, supporters and people who understand what Islamic state is all about. The question is people don't quite understand what Islamic state is all about.

islam and judiciary judgementWhen people are getting confused of the whole concept of the Islamic state, therefore there's a lot of interpretation. People have got different interpretations. But, our own interpretation of Islamic state is a very, very friendly, respecting people.. of course the word of 'Islam' is there, but Islam must not be taken as a religion per se, but as a way of life. The word Islamic state means welfare state, PAS is proposing what is exactly Islamic state.

You know, helping the poor and the downtrodden, and that is part of Islamic state. Being judicious, transparent, not corrupted.. Being leaders, you are expected to depict the kind of good examples. Whatever you do, must be exemplary. That is part of the concept. Respecting people, like I'm respecting the Chinese and the Indians for eating pork for instance. To provide them a good place in Sepang, rather than let them put their shacks everywhere that will cost environmental instability, I think it's not good.

If you allow that one, it will go against the very philosophy of Islamic state. But when negative political overtures coming in, then it is difficult. But the very basic philosophy of Islamic state is I think, very noble, very straight forward. Doing good things, taking care of your family, not going overboard in actions are part of the concept. If that is being preached out, I don't think anyone with their right frame of mind wouldn't agree with that part.

So, don't get PAS and our leaders wrong. When we talk about Islamic state, precisely, in a more comprehensible term for the Muslim and the non-Muslim, it would be a welfare state.

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