

PAS has to reinvent itself to stay relevant
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PAS has to reinvent itself if it aspires to become a political entity for all the races and religions in the country. PAS has to be seen as a party for all Malaysians based not only on the Islamic ideals but also on the universal principles of justice. Islam will not be able to replace the Western principles of democracy if among its own disciples we see practices which are not acceptable to the pragmatic approach to justice as cherished by all mankind.
MCPX

No matter how appealing Islam is depicted to the masses, without the disciples showing the exquisiteness of Islam in its practical and pragmatic forms, not many will be convinced with the beauty of the religion. Muslims have a duty to demonstrate the realism of Islam to suit contemporary society and to cater for the modern progressive minds of the people.

Mere trendy rhetoric to win the hearts of the illiterate and the semi-illiterate population will not suffice. The people these days, in broad-spectrum, demand for more substance, rationality and practicality- more than the practitioners manifest - to be convinced of Islam as a religion that is holistic (syumul) and fair to all mankind.

What the people discern currently is the many social problems faced by Malaysians as well as Muslims. We see injustices in society in its different manifestations – nepotism, corruption, crime, rape, incest, drug addiction and wayward youths all of which are a liability to the nation. Beyond this are the economy, education, employment and poverty that need to be addressed with knowledge and intelligence.

The country, to a certain extent, is facing a crisis of sorts due to unbridled injustice in its many manifestations. PAS has to come up with a blueprint on how to resolve all these issues so as to convince the people.

More could be done to bring about a better Malaysia for all and this is what PAS should look into. PAS should look into a code for advocating justice in society in a peaceable and non-controversial manner, and this will be Islamic enough to convince the people.

What are the practical solutions to these injustices in our society and what are the progressive solutions to overcome these issues so as to bring a better life to the people of Malaysia? This is where PAS has considerably failed.

Some PAS leaders are more interested in harping on matters that are more oblivious than obvious – form over the substance. If they are able to bring justice to society without fear and qualms but with intelligence and tactful means, that itself is Islamic and is sufficient to create an accommodative, harmonious and fair society accepted by both Muslims and the non-Muslims.

PAS should advocate a humanistic approach to resolve problems faced by society.

The people do not need to be reminded of treatment in the form of harsh punishments to become good citizens of a state. Let the approach in politics be more based on progressive thinking, intelligence and universally accepted values. Could the present breed of leaders in PAS face this challenge?

Of course, it is easy to arouse the emotions of the illiterate and the semi-illiterate population by using religion as a political tool. But the progressively-educated people of today from among all races and religions desire for more. They seek for unyielding substance rather than rhetoric. They shun harshness in any forms but aspire for more humanistic values to tackle issues pertinent to their well-being.

Thus, interminably harping on hudud is not going to help PAS much. Hudud (Arabic ḥudūd), literally means restrictions and is the word often used in Islamic literature for unacceptable behaviour and the punishment for serious crimes and other indecent acts. It is fundamentally a decree to bring justice to mankind.

The term hudud has been distorted by self-seeking politicians and the very mention of it has become a phobia among the non-Muslims in the country, as many have misunderstood the principles behind this decree. This is also the term that is most exploited by politicians from both camps in the country.

Since it can be easily exploited for political gain, the best resolve would be for PAS to totally refrain from talking about hudud. Seemingly, the term hudud in our society has become a delusive trap due to political ignorance.

If only PAS could focus more on mundane issues facing the country and its people, there will be a continuous and substantial support for the party from the people. PAS is wrong to assume that the people support the party because of the hudud issue. Some PAS leaders, unfortunately, have failed to realise this.

The people of Kelantan, for instance, have voted in PAS to rule the state for the past 18 years despite the fact that the state has not implemented hudud - the general population there is quite indifferent about the whole issue. Ironically, PAS lost Terengganu to Barisan Nasional in the last general election despite strongly advocating for hudud to be implemented.

PAS should also realise that not all Malays support PAS despite they being Muslims and not all Muslims who have supported PAS do so due to the hudud factor.

What the people expect from PAS is a universally accepted approach to justice in a society. This is the main tenet of Islamic teachings. Islam advocates justice for the human kind and also for all other creations of Allah. Islam was revealed to the Prophet to bring justice to oneself and the people - it is the promulgation of good character (akhlaq) in oneself that matters most in Islam and this can only be achieved if there is discipline and justice in society.

To achieve this, PAS does not have to be too religiously rhetorical each time there is an election but advocate pragmatism and tolerance. Islam is all about simplicity and practicality and harping on hudud and alarming the people is not a wise route to obtain support from the people.

PAS will stay relevant if universal justice is what they wish for in Malaysian politics. They should talk more on justice for mankind. PAS should also be aware of the priorities in Islam and the basic needs of the human kind before it falls into its own trap. Putting the cart before the horse is not going to bode well for PAS.