

**Anwar backs hudud in Kelantan**  
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**By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 22 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today threw his weight behind Kelantan's longstanding plans to implement hudud, saying that the laws proposed by the PAS government protected the rights of non-Muslims.

The Pakatan Rakyat (PR) de facto leader stressed however that PR had not discussed the matter and this was only a "personal opinion".

"For now, in general, in principle, I believe this can be implemented. Looking at the specific areas, and there is clear guarantee that there is administration of justice.

"It does not in any way infringe on the rights of non-Muslims," Anwar (picture) told reporters outside the Jalan Duta courthouse here.

He explained that Kelantan's hudud law plans were "specific" and it covered two important aspects — a fair administration according to Islamic law and ensuring that the rights of non-Muslims are protected.

"It is a specific area that affects Muslims and does not impeach rights of non-Muslims. The proceeding makes sure that administration of justice is guaranteed," he said.

Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat has challenged Datuk Seri Najib Razak to withdraw any objections the federal government still had over Kelantan's longstanding plans to implement hudud.

He dismissed as laughable suggestions that Kelantan could now go ahead to implement hudud in the state now that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was no longer the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir, the former prime minister, had previously written to the Kelantan menteri besar to inform him that the state did not have a right to implement hudud, which prescribes stoning, whipping and amputation as punishment for criminal offences.

But in remarks released through his Facebook page today, Nik Aziz pointed out that the letter from Dr Mahathir remained valid.

Anwar also challenged Najib to state his stand on the matter.

"These (laws) have been objected by Umno," added the former Umno deputy president.

Since 2008, PAS and its Pakatan Rakyat allies, the DAP and PKR, have won over non-Muslim support, largely due to unhappiness with graft in government as well as policies seen as discriminatory to them.

The MCA, MIC and Gerakan, the three major non-Muslim Barisan Nasional (BN) parties, have been struggling to win back voters after losing record numbers of seats in the 2008 general election.

Dr Mahathir's remarks are also designed to place pressure on PAS, which has successfully gained support among more moderate Malaysians by appearing to place its stated aim of forming a theocratic Islamic state on the back-burner.

PAS has tried to project a more moderate and progressive image in recent years, and has recently introduced its own version of a welfare state as part of its manifesto ahead of the next general election.

PAS had tried unsuccessfully in the past to introduce hudud and other strict Islamic laws.

But these attempts have all failed because of the federal government's refusal to sanction any vote on changes to the federal constitution.

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