

Anwar calls Umno-BN two-faced over hudud
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 24 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today accused Barisan Nasional and Umno of provoking greater tension among the different races by attempting to manipulate the hudud issue for political mileage.

“To the non-Muslim audience, they project an anti-Syariah stance, even on some occasions rubbishing it as a primitive system,” the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) de facto leader said.

This, he added, contrasted with Umno’s message “to the Muslim audience, [where] they relentlessly attack Pakatan Muslim leaders as being traitors to their religion and race by consorting with non-Muslim leaders.”

Anwar insisted that it was part of the ruling party’s “sinister” strategy to split its political foes and win the 13th general election, widely expected to be called within the next six months.

The opposition leader sought to play down the hudud row between PR allies DAP and PAS, stressing the pact operated only by consensus.

“As I have stated before, the right to practise one’s faith is a fundamental freedom that is guaranteed by the Federal Constitution,” he said, in a bid to allay fears that PAS may seek to enforce Islamic penal laws nationwide if PR comes to power.

He said the implementation of hudud in Kelantan is subject to the “maqasid al Syariah” or the Higher Objectives of the Syariah, which means justice for all, regardless of race, status or religion.

The result, he explained, meant non-Muslims would be excluded from Islamic jurisdiction, adding that this view has been included in the PR’s election manifesto, Orange Book.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had earlier today pledged his administration would block any attempt to implement the Islamic penal law, in a bid to curtail further debate on the fractious subject.

Hudud is a prickly subject in multicultural Malaysia where race and religion are closely-linked. The country’s 28-million population is also still haunted by the bloody racial riots of May 13, 1969.

The issue is raised cyclically as political fodder as its divisive nature often causes conflicts to occur within otherwise-friendly circles, making it ideal to pit parties with opposing ideologies against one another.

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