

## **Hudud will empty out PAS's non-Muslim wing, says chief**

**The Malaysian Insider**

**October 9, 2011**

**By Yow Hong Chieh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 — PAS risks losing the support of and triggering an exodus from its non-Muslim wing if the Islamist party does not yield on the hudud issue, says PAS Supporters Congress (PSC) chairman Hu Pang Chaw.

He said many members were unhappy about PAS's plans to introduce hudud law in Kelantan and warned this could cause non-Muslims to desert the congress en masse, damaging the party's chances at the polls.

"We have to admit in politics anything can happen," Kelantan-born Hu told The Malaysian Insider.

"When you fall in love with somebody, by hook or by crook, you'll get together. But when the love is gone, when the feeling is not there anymore, you go your way, I go mine."

Hu said this was especially true of PAS's Chinese supporters, who were prepared to abandon the party if they felt they were not getting returns on their "investment".

"When they think this party ... can no longer be considered the best party, they will walk away. PAS has to bear this in mind," he said.

PAS should accept that Malaysia is a multiracial country and forgo its attempt to impose hudud on non-Muslims as this would backfire on the party, Hu added.

He said PAS should shed its "phobia" of non-Muslims and embrace this relatively new vote bloc instead of holding on to outmoded ways of thinking by championing purely Malay causes, he added.

PAS Supporters Congress (PSC) chairman Hu Pang Chaw (centre) said "anything can happen in politics". — file pic

"My sincere advice to PAS leaders is, if they really want to take over Putrajaya, they must get used to this way of life," he said.

The PSC, formerly known as the PAS Supporters Club, was formed in 2004 to help build non-Muslim support for PAS, just a week before the party suffered a rout in the 11th general election.

It was elevated to a non-voting wing of PAS in May last year to help recruit non-Muslim party members, mainly in Kedah, Perak and Selangor.

The 20,000-strong PSC has been credited with bridging the gap between PAS and non-Muslims, and softening the Islamist party's hardline image among the Chinese and Indians.

The current flap over hudud began two weeks ago when former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad dared Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat to enact the Islamic law in Kelantan now that the Umno veteran was no longer in power.

Dr Mahathir had previously written to the Kelantan menteri besar in 1993 to inform him that the state did not have the right to introduce hudud, which prescribes stoning, whipping and amputation as punishment for criminal offences.

Nik Aziz, who is also PAS spiritual leader, however, dismissed the suggestion as laughable and instead challenged Prime Minister Datuk Najib Razak to withdraw any objections Putrajaya still had over Kelantan's plans to implement hudud.

PAS has drawn flak from Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) allies over its plans to implement hudud, with the DAP central committee threatening to quit if Kelantan goes ahead as planned.

PAS, which has assured that any introduction of hudud will be done slowly and in phases, said yesterday it would kick off a series of talks in Kelantan to explain hudud law to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The Malaysian Insider

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