

**Anwar: BN grasping at straws with hudud play**  
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**By Lisa J. Ariffin**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 25 — The incessant focus on hudud and Islamic state issues in the mainstream media is Barisan Nasional's "last desperate attempt" to deflect from its own corruption and abuses, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

The opposition leader today said BN was attempting to sow racial and religious strife as well as "intimidate" voters with reminders of racial unrest, via the media outlets its parties own in the run-up to the general election.

The BN-friendly media has also been highlighting the disparate stances of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) partners DAP and PAS on the emotive issues: The former opposes the Islamic state and penal code that the latter aspires to realise.

"[On the issues of] Syariah, hudud, and the Islamic state, we recognise and respect the different views and positions of the component parties in the PR," Anwar, who is also PKR de facto leader, said today in a statement. PKR is the third party in PR.

He also insisted PR was committed to fundamental principles enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

"The PR joint policy and the Orange Book remain intact as clear statements of our policies and principles of governance," Anwar continued.

"The position of Islam as the religion of the Federation; Bahasa Melayu as the national language; sovereignty of the Malay rulers together with the position of the special privileges of the Malays and Bumiputeras and the rights of other races as protected by the Constitution," he explained.

Anwar then urged the public not to be "waylaid" by BN's "politics of desperation and intimidation", and asked them to evaluate the situation with maturity and wisdom before deciding on the matter.

Last week, influential former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that PAS could realise its goal to set up an Islamic state and enforce hudud if it joined Umno, in a bid to woo the Islamist party to BN's side.

His remarks came in the wake of a recent controversy after religious conservatives, including the state muftis of Pahang and Perak, dubbed the DAP "kafir harbi" or belligerent infidels for its consistent opposition to hudud, dragging PAS and PKR into a heated debate.

The controversy prompted PAS president Datuk Seri Hadi Awang to rise to its ally's defence, pointing out that while the DAP opposed hudud, Umno had already rejected its implementation.

Hudud and the Islamic state were two issues that tore asunder the fledgling Barisan Alternatif — the precursor to the present day PR — following Election 1999, when DAP and PAS went their separate ways after failing to reach a compromise.

But the focus on the two issues has also put the spotlight on the mixed messages sent by BN. Umno has often courted PAS by offering to help it realise its Islamic state aim, while MCA openly rejects hudud and any form of Islamic rule.

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