

Hudud, Religious Slurs Embroil Opposition In Controversy

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 30 (Bernama) -- Owing to its fragile cohesion, the opposition drifted into the centre of controversy for most parts of the year over numerous political gaffes and religious slurs made by its leaders.

Perak DAP chairman Datuk Ngeh Koo Ham had drawn the ire of various quarters for a tweet on Muslim opposition to the "Innocence of Muslims" film which allegedly insulted Prophet Muhammad and Islam.

In his tweet, Ngeh said, "Khairy (Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin) wants Muslim protest against Sam Bacile. For Islam or for his political gains? Are Muslims wasting too much time and energy on this?"

The classic slip of the tongue (or rather a conscious conviction) was Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar's comment on freedom of religion.

A pro-opposition news portal, in a report on Nov 3, had quoted Nurul Izzah as saying that people should not be compelled to adopt a particular religion, and that this should also apply to Malays.

"When you ask me, there is no compulsion in religion ... how can anyone say sorry, this (religious freedom) only applies to non-Malays, it has to apply equally," she was quoted as saying when speaking at a forum on "Islamic State: Which version; Who's responsibility?" in Subang Jaya on that date.

His father, opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim tried in vain to defend her, but it boiled down to a denial.

The Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah and the Sultan of Pahang Sultan Ahmad Shah also expressed their disappointment over Nurul Izzah's statement.

Nurul Izzah was asked to repent by a member of the PAS Shura Council Nasharuddin Mat Isa, who was also former PAS deputy president, and Perak mufti Tan Sri Harussani Zakaria, who described it a great sin.

In the meantime, hudud (Islamic criminal law) is still a thorn in the opposition's flesh for PAS and the DAP still have a huge difference in opinion over its implementation should the opposition come to power.

In May, PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang reiterated that hudud was still part of PAS' struggle, but not a priority for the welfare state concept would be its focus for the coming general election.

On the other hand, DAP president Karpal Singh lamented that the party had not at any time agreed to the implementation of 'hudud' law in the country and the issue could not be subjected to any compromise and urged Hadi to stop making statements on behalf of the opposition.

However, PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who is also Kelantan menteri

besar, stressed that the party would still be implementing hudud despite objection from the other opposition parties.

Oddly, PAS had not been able to implement hudud in Kelantan after being in power for over 22 years as well as in Kedah since wresting the state in 2008.

These outbursts were merely for political expediency - the DAP does not want to lose the non-Malay support while PAS wants Muslims to be under its domain.

While the 58th PAS Muktamar saw delegates suggesting Abdul Hadi becomes the prime minister if the opposition wins the general election, the DAP at its 16th national congress repeated its support for Anwar to lead the country if their dream comes true.

Selangor executive councillor Datuk Dr Hasan Ali was sacked from PAS in January for being critical of the party's leadership and its administration, and formed Jalur Tiga (Jati) to pursue his struggle to uphold Islam, champion the Malays and protect the position of rulers.

In May, Tunku Aziz Tunku Abdul Aziz Tunku Ibrahim had announced his resignation as DAP vice-president and left the party, due to a disagreement in views pertaining the Bersih 3.0 rally, for which his senatorship which ended in May was not extended.

On the amusing side, Selangor Menteri Besar's Office communications director Dr Badrulamin Bahron, who is also PKR supreme council member, was allegedly caught for committing khalwat (close proximity) with a woman in Kuantan while a VCD footage of a man resembling PKR deputy president Mohamed Azmin Ali allegedly being with a woman in a toilet went viral.

On the embarrassing side, many non-governmental organisations criticised the Selangor government for not inviting the Sultan of Selangor to its state-level Merdeka Day celebrations, describing the snub as rude, arrogant and impudent.

The hullabaloo over the Kelantan state ruling that a female hairstylist cannot cut the hair of a male customer and vice versa also applies to non-Muslims has drawn flak from various quarters.

The controversy over the strict enforcement of local council rules on unisex hair salons emanated when a female hairdresser was summoned by the Kota Bharu Municipal Council (MPKB) for cutting the hair of a non-Muslim male customer.

The Kelantan government recently postponed enforcement of the MPKB licensing condition on hair salons operated by non-Muslims.

In Selangor, the state government is saddled with the debt recovery exercise from Talam Corporation, the looming water crisis by 2015, and a suit filed by 3,011 single mothers demanding it to pay them RM16.26 million in allowance due to them as promised by the opposition pact in its 2008 general election manifesto.

Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim is also embroiled in a spat with Azmin, who allegedly meddled in administration of the state.

The controversy first started when Azmin was reported as saying that the Selangor menteri besar could be replaced and Khalid would be appointed as federal minister if opposition coalition won the next general election.

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