

**Karpal's last thoughts on hudud, sedition act and ties in Pakatan  
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In one of his last interviews before his sudden death in an auto accident on April 17, Karpal Singh spoke to DAP mouthpiece The Rocket on matters close to his heart and his political struggle, including the hudud, the Sedition Act that he was charged with, and inter-party relations with PAS and PKR.

Karpal's (pic) interview, which is available on The Rocket's website and its April edition, is reproduced with permission.

Q: You have been frank about issues close to your heart and never hold back in taking a strong stand on issues that other DAP leaders don't dare to vocalise. Why?

I have been elected by my constituents and it is my duty as an elected member of parliament to speak the views of the people. As long as one abides by the law and is in line with democratic principles under which we operate, no leader should be afraid to air his views.

It would be a sad day for DAP if we hold back just so we don't get into trouble. It won't be in the interest of the party or the country. I articulate certain things and issues that are close to the hearts of the people I represent, not just a party stance per se. Of course the party stance is also in line with the constitution.

Q: Has your approach to politics changed now that DAP is a part of Pakatan Rakyat?

There is no such thing as a personal approach to politics; the approach must be in line with our principles. Each of us has a different style. It is the ultimate results that count. The motives or objectives of the party are reflected in what I speak.

Q: Do you think the BN-controlled media has often spun your comments out of context?

They sometimes give my statements a certain twist. And it is not easy for us to correct that because whatever I say as the point of correction doesn't see print.

Q: Your remarks have been viewed as being principled for staunch DAP supporters. But for DAP partners' supporters, especially PAS's Malay voters, it has turned them off especially with regard to hudud and Islamic state issues. How do you explain this?

It is stating what it is. We are not an Islamic state. Malaysia is a secular state and the constitutional provisions are there. There is no place for hudud laws in the country. What I say is always backed up by law or reason.

It is not easy for our coalition partner PAS to accept it, which has its own principles and ideology. But on the other hand, DAP's stance, consistent with the law and the constitution must be made clear, however painful it may be to them. We hope they understand that I am not doing this with a bad motive or mala fide.

It is not an easy task; sometimes it requires us to reconcile with the irreconcilable.

How do we do that? On the one hand, it is important that we state our principles and also what our supporters expect. We have been put where we are today as a result of the confidence the people have in us. And I don't think we should betray them. I think it is a clear reflection that our ground would want whatever I have been espousing all these years.

It is difficult to balance the interest of the party and the interests of the coalition parties, particularly for PAS and DAP. With the sensitivities that are involved, it is not easy, but the party stand must be made clear.

Q: If hudud proponents were to moot for a referendum, what would DAP's stance be? Would it be an easy jump towards hudud if the proponents have the majority?

In a referendum, anything that is put up for voting must be in line with constitutional provisions, such as the contents and the terms of reference stated in the referendum.

There are certain provisions of the constitution which form the basic structure of the constitution. Any attempt made to change that basic structure will be working towards the destruction of the constitution, which we can't do.

The matter of hudud has been questioned in court in 1988 and it may happen again. In that instance, the federal court unanimously ruled that the country operates by secular law, which means that Malaysia is not an Islamic state. You can't have an Islamic state

where secular law is the order of the day.

Q: In other words, the entire constitution has to be rewritten?

The basic structure of the constitution has to be completely changed. It will be destroying the document upon which all Malaysians abide by. It's a social contract and the terms of the contract must be adhered to.

Q: Each PR party has its individual strengths and the people know that we stand for our principles. How do we move from mere convenient cooperation to genuine relationship after all that we have been through for the last 15 years?

We can definitely improve on our cooperation much more. It is in the interest of the parties to cooperate so that the ultimate result is stronger support from the people. Also, there should be more cooperation in substance than just the label. We have to strive for something more practical. There is no question of both DAP and PAS merging, in view of the differing ideologies.

With the results shown in 2008 and 2013 it has been fantastic. We can improve further provided there is close working relationship between PAS and DAP; with 89 seats in parliament, who would have ever imagined it.

Q: On the Allah case, what do you make out of the PR stance?

It is good that the upper echelon of PAS agree that the word "Allah" can be used by non-Muslims and this has been supported by many other Islamic countries that have agreed that Allah is not exclusive to the Muslims.

Q: What are your views on the Sedition Act? Notwithstanding the definition of sedition under BN, how would you define something that is seditious or has seditious tendencies?

Sedition is something that is archaic. During the colonial times, it was the practice to stifle the voice of and arrest people who opposed the government, anything you say against them would be deemed as seditious.

But the country has become independent; all that should have been done over with.

This (the Sedition Act) is a 1948 law. That's 66 years ago. It is a long time ago. I think this sedition act should have been pensioned off long ago.

In fact, the prime minister is on public record saying that it will be repealed soon. But that doesn't seem to be happening. It has been enforced with more intensity now. The numbers of leaders that have been charged are quite a few.

Q: What motivates you to participate in and stay in politics?

I always thought as a lawyer, the political arena is something very natural to aspire to be in. Politics complements the law.

After the May 13, 1969, riots I decided to join a multiracial party to ensure that whatever happened then will never happen again. And the best party was and still is the DAP, which I joined in 1970 and have remained in till today.

I would like to carry on as long as I can, health permitting. I believe I can still contribute, but there are forces out there who want to stop me.

And as for one who wants to be an MP, you must be prepared to stand up and do what is required of an elected representative. We can't be frightened and not say certain things to avoid getting into trouble, If you are, then you have made the wrong choice. – April 29, 2014.

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