

Is hudud all that matters to the Kelantan government?

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Commentary by The Malaysian Insider

Perhaps it is a case of come hell or high water, the Kelantan government is just set on ensuring that Islamic criminal law or hudud can be implemented in the Malay heartland state.

After all, high water did come to pass last December when floods swept through the state and left tens of thousands homeless. And hell is just another way to describe the slumping economy that Kelantan folk have complained over the years.

Despite years of economic drift, the state is still under PAS since 1990, much to the chagrin of Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) which have been struggling to wrest it from the Islamist party over the years.

But perhaps the clerics who run PAS should pause and take heed of the latest Merdeka Center survey issued today.

The independent pollster found that a majority of voters in the peninsula said the PAS-led Kelantan government should focus on post-flood reconstruction, rather than its hudud law amendments.

According to a survey of 1,008 voters interviewed over the telephone, 84% thought the state government should concentrate on repairing and rebuilding homes of flood victims.

This is also the prevalent view of 81% Malay/Muslim respondents interviewed across the peninsula, it added.

"It should be noted that the survey found this view prevalent across key Malay/Muslim demographics of gender, age groups and media consumers.

"This finding is also in line with Merdeka Center's previous finding in a survey carried out in April 2014, which revealed that a majority (58%) of Malay respondents thought that the country is not ready for hudud implementation," Merdeka Center said in a statement.

PAS has not listened to the findings of any surveys, nor has it listened to its allies in Pakatan Rakyat (PR) thus far. Perhaps it feels that the Kelantan victory in all elections since 1990 is proof that the Kelantanese want hudud laws.

It could also be a case that they might not want Umno or BN because most of the voters in Kelantan actually live and work in states ruled by the federal coalition government.

And their vote for PAS is more a vote against Umno, rather than for hudud. But all this

could be lost to PAS, which appear to have become parochial and puritanical in their outlook after losing Kedah and several semi-rural seats in the west coast of the peninsula.

If they actually believe in good governance as demanded by Islam, then PAS should look at improving the lives and livelihood of those in Kelantan before thinking of ways to punish them according to Islamic precepts.

As it is, they are already punished by a government that has done little for their lives on earth. If the hudud comes to pass, it will be the PAS government's crowning achievement but just another punishment for their voters.

And that is definitely not what Islam is all about. – March 16, 2015.

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