

**Without PKR, PAS can still push through hudud bill**  
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**By Sheridan Mahavera**

PAS only needs a simple majority to push through a law in Parliament allowing it to enforce hudud in Kelantan, said a political scientist, even as all its Pakatan Rakyat allies have turned their backs on it.

The Islamist party's aim to implement hudud or the Shariah Criminal Enactment in Kelantan depends on whether it can get its arch-rival Umno to support a private member's bill in the Dewan Rakyat.

Dr Wong Chin Huat of the Penang Institute said the bill required only a simple majority of all MPs present in the Dewan Rakyat at the time of voting. This means PAS can get it through if all Umno MPs also say yes to it.

It is not a case whereby PAS and Umno need 112 votes, a simple majority, in the house in order to get the bill through, said Wong, referring to a common misconception about passing legislation or amendments.

If there are enough MPs who support it in the Dewan Rakyat at the time of voting versus those who don't support it or those who abstain from voting, then the bill passes.

Parliament has 222 members. PAS has 21 MPs and Umno 88 and if the latter said they will support it, then it would bring the number of MPs who support the bill at 109.

In order to defeat the bill, there must be at least 110 votes against it.

The only way the bill can be defeated is if almost all PKR, DAP and the other Barisan Nasional MPs who opposed the bill, come out to vote against it in the house.

"If you abstain from voting on the bill, it is giving passive consent without responsibility," said Wong, who heads the political and social analysis section at the institute.

PAS's ally PKR yesterday stated it would not back the bill, which would be tabled by PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang.

Hadi through the bill wants to change the Shariah Courts Act 1965 which limits the scope of punishment that states can craft for Shariah offences and restrict the creation of criminal legislation to the federal government.

PAS's other ally, DAP, which has 37 MPs, is already upset with PAS's new Shariah Criminal Offences Enactment which was passed in the Kelantan assembly on Thursday. It is actively reviewing whether to leave PR because of PAS's actions.

Wong said the law which PAS wanted to amend would require a majority of all MPs in the Dewan Rakyat at the time of voting.

This is different from amending the Federal Constitution, which requires a two-thirds majority of all 222 MPs.

Dr Lim Teck Ghee of the Centre for Policy Initiatives, said Umno's national leadership will shy away from supporting the bill which has been vociferously opposed by Sabah and Sarawak Barisan Nasional parties.

"I think PAS is alone on this one. Umno won't support it because it is taking into account Sabah and Sarawak. It is very clear that hudud has very little supporters in Sabah and Sarawak."

Sabah and Sarawak BN parties, such Parti Bersatu Sabah, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) and Parti Rakyat Sarawak, are critical to keeping Umno and BN in power with their 46 MPs.

"If Umno supports hudud, it could spell the end of BN in Sabah and Sarawak," said Lim.

Until today, only Kelantan Umno has voiced its support for PAS's hudud, when its state lawmakers supported a new enactment this week.

Umno's national leadership has not given an official stand on whether they support the private member's bill, with some Umno MPs contradicting themselves over whether the party supports it.

It is speculated that Umno is trying to drive a wedge between PR allies PAS by secretly telling the Islamist party that it will support the bill.

This clandestine pact is supposedly driving PAS hardliners, who are actively pushing for hudud, to bring the bill to Parliament.

"Politically and legally, I think this initiative was badly handled by PAS," said Lim, adding that the Islamist party has damaged its reputation among a majority in the voting public.

"It has also damaged its relationship with its partners in PR, which is the real reason it won so many seats in the 2013 general election."

In fact, a Merdeka Center poll on March 16 revealed that 81% of Muslims throughout the peninsula want PAS to concentrate on reconstruction work in Kelantan, which has been devastated by the floods instead of pushing for hudud.

After hudud, said Lim, PAS would need a real change in leadership if it wants to regain credibility in the public eye.

"If the moderates take over in the (party's) June elections, then maybe they can regain lost support," said Lim. – March 22, 2015.

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