

**Hudud hijacked for political reasons, says PAS lawmaker**  
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**By Looi Sue-Chern**

The hudud issue has been hijacked by certain quarters for their own political interests, a PAS lawmaker said in Penang today.

Datuk Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa said the hudud issue surfaced last year when minister in charge of religious affairs Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom said Putrajaya was ready to amend the Shariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (Act 355), which would allow Kelantan to implement hudud.

The PAS National Unity Committee chairman said somehow the issue was "shot back" at Kelantan, when the PAS-led state government was told to table a bill to make it happen.

He said never in the history of the Malaysian Parliament was the opposition tasked with reenacting a law.

"Why would the federal government tell a state to come up with the motion to amend a law, when something like that involved the cabinet, the Attorney-General's Chambers and the Conference of Rulers?"

"The opposition does not have its own A-GC or the ability to influence the decision of the cabinet or the rulers. We are not the government of the day."

"It is my suspicion that the whole hudud issue has been hijacked by some quarters to serve the interest of politics, rather than substantially discuss the issue," he said in Penang today after a roundtable discussion with the media about hudud and Kelantan's recently amended Shariah Criminal Code II Enactment.

The amendments to the Shariah Criminal Code II Enactment 1993 was passed by the Kelantan legislative assembly on March 19 with the support of Umno assemblymen.

PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang has said he would table a private member's bill during the ongoing parliamentary sitting to allow the enactment with hudud punishments, such as the amputation of the hand for theft and death for apostasy, to be implemented in Kelantan.

This has caused a serious rift between PAS and its partners in Pakatan Rakyat, especially with DAP which declared on Tuesday that the party would no longer work with Hadi.

Mujahid said Umno must declare whether it wanted the Shariah criminal code to be implemented or not.

He asked when would Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is Umno president, state his stand

because the longer he delayed, the longer the issue would drag on.

"Gerakan and other Barisan Nasional component parties have stated their stand. Why didn't Umno stop them from making statements?"

"I fear that this is all for certain political interests," he said.

On whether this was a ploy to divert the people's attention from other major issues like the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) starting Wednesday, Mujahid said he could not say that the Islamic penal code issue was not being used for political manoeuvring.

"Maybe Umno needs this issue, too. Maybe it is a contest to see which party is more Islamic," he said, agreeing that there could be such a possibility.

During the discussion that lasted about 90 minutes, Mujahid also addressed the complicated issue of legalising the amended enactment, the philosophy behind the law and problems of enforcing it.

He said he hoped that when the matter was debated in Parliament, where the members of the house were more diverse than those in the Kelantan legislative assembly, lawmakers would focus on the legality of the enactment rather than on religion.

"As Muslims, we believe it can be done but when you are in authority, you cannot avoid discussing the challenges involved in the matter."

In 1993, when the first version of the Shariah criminal code was passed in Kelantan, Mujahid said there was also a debate about the law violating Act 355, which stated that any state Shariah court in country was not allowed to pass judgments heavier than three years jail, six lashes and RM5,000 fine.

"That was the main hurdle. Not now. People want to debate that this is a secular state so Shariah criminal laws cannot be implemented, but how can you say this is a secular state when the official religion of the federation is Islam?"

"A secular state would not indicate any element of religion in its constitution. We can continue arguing about this point but let's be practical because the real hurdle is Act 355, which limits the punishments," he said, adding that the Barisan Nasional federal government had been using the act to stop Kelantan from implementing the Shariah criminal law.

Asked if hudud was something to be afraid of, Mujahid said as a lawmaker, he would advise people to be ready to face two opposing sides when the matter was brought to the democratic environment for debates – one that supported it and the other that opposed it.

"We do not want hudud to be the cause of chaos," he said, adding that it was

understandable that non-Muslims were apprehensive about the Shariah criminal code because they were concerned about legal issues, not because they were anti-Islam. – March 28

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