

## **'Shariah amendment to be revived when Umno is stronger'**

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**Sarawak rep Chong Chieng Jen says Umno's 'brain-washing' programme, especially in the Borneo state, will turn more Muslims into agreeing to hudud law in Malaysia.**

PETALING JAYA: Sarawak DAP chairman Chong Chieng Jen has cautioned that the move to amend shariah law in Malaysia may be revived within the next 15 years after Umno is powerful enough to impose it.

The Kota Sentosa assemblyman said despite the announcement by prime minister and Umno president Najib Razak that the government would not take over and table a private member's bill on the matter, the Umno-led administration will likely proceed with it when the party can withstand political opposition to such a move.

He said the Umno-led Barisan Nasional (BN) ran the risk of losing Sarawak and Sabah in the next general election if it had gone ahead with the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965, or Act 355.

"This is a real risk that Najib cannot afford to take," Chong said in a statement yesterday.

"As a result, the Hudud Bill is thus postponed to another date. But surely this is only a temporary measure.

"The whole issue may again be revived in another five, 10 or 15 years when Umno becomes more powerful," he said.

Chong claimed that Umno has, through "indoctrination of racism and religious bigotry in our education system", churned out more bigots in the country.

"The import of West Malaysian Islamic religious teachers into Sarawak is just another example of such brain-washing projects of Umno on the Sarawak populace," he said.

He stressed that there will be more Sarawakian Muslims thinking the same way as "bigots" in Umno and PAS who have been pushing for the bill.

There would then be even more leaders of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, that currently heads Sarawak, having the same mentality as present Umno leaders, he added.

Umno would then be able to table such a bill with stronger support even in Sarawak because of the increase in the Muslim population there.

“Umno’s brain-washing programmes will turn more Muslims into agreeing to the implementation of hudud law in Malaysia,” he said.

The unfair electoral re-delineation exercise would also contribute to Umno always having more MPs in its favour, he added.

“Today, Sarawak may have objected to the implementation of hudud law in Sarawak.

“However, if we continue to allow Umno to import its ideology into Sarawak, in another 10 or 20 years, when those subject to Umno indoctrination programmes have grown of age, will the Sarawak government continue to object to the implementation of hudud law?”

He pointed out that there were now more than 1,000 West Malaysian Islamic religious teachers teaching their version of Islamic values in Sarawak.

“If we truly want to defend and preserve the secularism under our Federal Constitution, Umno must be made the opposition in the coming general election,” he said.

“It is only when Umno is made the opposition that it can no longer implement its hudud agenda.”

Chong also noted that PAS currently has only 14 MPs while Umno has 86 in the Dewan Rakyat, adding that both parties do not have more than half of the MPs in Parliament.

He said whether the other BN MPs would support the bill remains questionable despite the fact that it was tabled by the government.

He noted the U-turn by Umno, as deputy prime minister and Umno deputy president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had stressed that the government would go ahead with tabling the bill as they were willing to lose old friends who were against the move.

This was followed by Najib making the announcement to the contrary after chairing the BN supreme council meeting on March 29.

He said this exposed the danger of having an over-powerful Umno capable of playing around with the secularism enshrined in the Federal Constitution based solely on its political strategic consideration.

PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang put forward the private member’s bill in the house in November last year.

It sought to raise the maximum penalties for shariah offences to 30 years’ jail, RM100,000 for fines and 100 strokes of the cane.

Shariah court punishment is currently capped at jail terms not exceeding three years, a maximum of RM5,000 for fines and whipping of not more than six strokes of the cane.

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