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Red faces in Pakatan

The new crop of PAS leaders want to be seen and accepted but every so often problems like last week's Jais raid on a church function crops up and gives the lie to the party as a 'liberal and accommodative' party.



Comment

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PAS cannot decide whether or not to take action against Selangor executive councillor Datuk Dr Hassan Ali over his support of a raid at a multi-racial function in Petaling Jaya last week to stop alleged proselytising of Muslims by Christians.

The raid by the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department (Jais), also involving the police, has sparked angry reactions from both Christians and non-Christians, who have demanded action against Dr Hassan.

Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim expressed regret over the incident but hot on the heels of his statement came Dr Hassan's statement supporting the raid and alluding to Christian proselytising.

He defended the Jais raid, saying words like *Quran* and *pray* were used at the function at the Damansara Utama Methodist Church hall.

By not taking immediate action against him, PAS has disappointed many people who support the party.

At its central committee meeting yesterday, PAS discussed the matter and decided to become an arbitrator between the church and Jais officers to investigate the circumstances leading to the raid.

PAS secretary-general Datuk Mustafa Ali will report back to the party ahead of any action against Dr Hassan, who said he was prepared to be "sacked for defending Islam."

Sensing a general election is near, the party has decided not to disrupt its more conservative vote bank by acting against its most problematic leader.

PAS wants to get mileage from the incident, keep its more conservative

members happy that it is not seen as going after Dr Hasan and at the same time win over the non-Muslim voters that it needs if it is to win in the many mixed constituencies its candidates hope to contest.

Despite this and many past transgressions, PAS has been unable to act against Dr Hassan, who represents the fundamentalist core that some current top leaders are seeking to bury from the public eye.

The party even elected a new crop of liberal leaders, like deputy president Mohamed Sabu, in the June

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party elections. But its fundamentalist core keeps rearing its head to alarm non-Muslims and defeat the party's image-building.

The new leaders want to be seen and accepted but every so often problems like last week's Jais raid crop up and gives the lie to PAS as a "liberal and accommodative" party.

The function, although held in the church premises, was a fund-raising event for HIV/AIDS and involved some dozen Muslims and many non-Muslims, presumably including Christians, Hindus and Buddhists.

In fact, the main organiser was a Muslim who was dragged to the Jais office the next day along with other Muslims who had participated, for an explanation.

As a political party, it is advisable that PAS doesn't go poking its nose into matters that are the purview of the Selangor state government.

Dr Hasan has shown over-zealousness over the issue as if he is the protector of Islam, said Karpal Singh. "He has overacted," he said.

DAP is finding it hard to remain loyal to PAS and support its excesses and hopes this storm would blow over soon.

Dr Hasan said he was prepared to be "sacked for defending Islam" as he walked into the party meeting on Sunday and got off without even a rap on his knuckles.

An off-shoot of the incident is

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charges that Christians are using cash, free food and housing to convert impoverished Muslims – which is really a figment of the imagination.

This is because Muslim organisations here are very rich and actively

proselytise not only in the country but also in the region which has enclaves of Muslims.

With PAS being an Islamist party, its adherents take succour from the Quran, quoting extensively from the book for all of modern man's needs.

Non-Muslims need more than Quranic exhortations. They need a progressive, democratic and secular party that is based on the rule of law. That's exactly why PAS is not the answer but the problem for Pakatan Rakyat.