



newsdesk@thestar.com.my

Politicians or theologians?

Kelantan is clearly a failed state and its PAS government doesn't have a clue how to uplift the standard of living of the people there. They certainly deserve better.

It is bizarre to hear PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang dismiss the present system of government as a failure.

The real failure is Kelantan which his party has ruled for the last 22 years. It is a failed state and the PAS state government doesn't have a clue, nor does it care, how it is going to uplift the standard of living of the people there. I guess Hadi doesn't care because the Islamist party gets voted in again and again.

Speaking at the recent party general assembly, he said although present systems such as democracy, socialism and capitalism have borrowed some elements from Islam, they do not take "faith, sin and blessings" into consideration.

The hardliner PAS politician said: "We intend to take a new approach to revive what was implemented by Islam 1,400 years ago."

No one, regardless of their faith and political allegiance, will argue that God's law is perfect but we know those claiming to speak on God's behalf are mere mortals with plenty of flaws.

These are the politicians invoking God's name and worse, for some, they begin to think they are God – and here I am talking generally, with no reference to any one party.

We have all experienced, in all kinds of religions, how those who use religion to exert their authority often have little tolerance for dissent.

Critics are often dismissed, if not punished, for giving their views.

They are deemed to lack the expertise to question these leaders. In the case of minorities, they simply are not entitled to even speak.

What is taking place in Kelantan is a pity because the people of Kelantan are the most hardworking lot.

I have plenty of friends from that state since my student days in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia who have been truly successful in their careers. But it's the same story – they have abandoned Kelantan and are working in Kuala Lumpur.



All pain, no gain: Kelantan folks are very hardworking but the state remains the poorest in the country.

If Kelantan is the PAS model of a successful administration system, then there must be something fundamentally wrong with the party because of its failures in many areas that they do not talk much about.

Behind the puritanical environment imposed by the PAS state government, it is a sad fact that women top the list of those afflicted with HIV/AIDS, as compared to those in other states.

According to one news report, their affliction has been attributed to their spouses or boyfriends often making "pleasure" trips to Thailand.

The promiscuous lifestyle of those men was a main factor for indirect exposure of HIV/AIDS to the women. Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) president Datuk Mohd Zaman Khan was quoted as saying. The state also remains consistently the one with the highest number of AIDS cases.

Take for instance in 2010, the number of Kelantanese diagnosed with HIV was 28.2 people for every 100,000 population. The national ratio then was 12.9 people for every 100,000 population.

And in 2009, a total of 616 HIV/AIDS cases were detected of which 16% were women.

Of the figure, 40% were housewives.

In 2014, Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zahid Hamidi said Kelantan also recorded the highest rate of methamphetamine distribution in the country.

The state also is also among the top ranked for rape – and yes, we know the standard accusation by PAS leaders – that the cause of such crimes is due to the victims being "indecently dressed."

Yet, we all know that most of these rapes in rural areas involved known perpetrators, including relatives. And in a rural setting, it is ridiculous to suggest these victims would be sexily attired.

The late Kelantan PAS Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Nik Aziz Nik Mat may be a respectable religious teacher but he would also be remembered as saying that girls who did not cover their *aurat* (flesh that should remain covered) deserved to get raped.

The PAS answer to crime in the state seems to be to just increase punishments – it has never bothered to find out the root causes for the offences. Perhaps, PAS does not want to know.

Other states, without the social oppression, do not seem to have the kind of problems

faced in Kelantan. At least, not as prevalent as Kelantan.

But the saddest crime are actually being committed by the PAS leaders – how can they explain why Kelantan remains the poorest state in the peninsula?

The average household income in Kelantan today is the lowest in Malaysia and is about a third of a household in Kuala Lumpur.

That's not all. Kelantan reportedly has the highest infant mortality rate in the country. It has been reported that the risk of a newborn child in Kelantan dying before reaching age five is twice that of a child in Kuala Lumpur.

By very conservative estimates, 15% of children in Kelantan live in poverty while at least 7% are under-nourished, it is said.

The people of Kelantan deserve better. For decades, they have placed their faith in a party that supposedly has the best answers, but the reality is that they cannot rule a state in a modern society with its myriad of complex issues.

A properly run modern state must have leaders with strong training and expertise in business, economics, finance and management.

It is obvious PAS has none. In fact, at its recent general assembly, there was zero discussion on the economy, and the perception is they have little knowledge, if not, no interest to the issues affecting Malaysia and the world.

Has the gender segregation, lit up cinemas, ban on Malay culture with supposedly Hindu influences, summons on tight clothing and fines on unisex hair salons helped? You figure it out rationally.

Do the ex-PAS leaders in Parti Amanah Negara, or those aspiring to join the new party, make any difference? None at all. They are the same guys pushing for hudud to be implemented when they were in PAS and it is well documented in the media.

We should know better than to trust theologians wanting to be politicians and politicians aspiring to be theologians. The people in Kelantan deserve better.