

MP SPEAKS As the Upko chief, I feel duty bound to explain why Upko objected to the tabling of the Private Member's Bill by Abdul Hadi Awang, the MP for Marang.

It has been said that the Private Member's Bill, tabled on May 26, is not a Hudud Bill and this had been widely debated.

The contents of the Bill itself seeks to amend Section 2 of the Syariah Court (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 and to enhance the jurisdiction of the the punishment for offence under the Syariah Courts, which is limited to a term of imprisonment not exceeding three years, or whipping of not more than six strokes, or fine of not more than RM5,000.

There are concerns that once power is given to the Syariah Courts to impose any punishment except death, it would then be followed with the introduction of new criminal offences by the states in the Syariah Courts with punishments exceeding the current jurisdiction as allowed under the Syariah Court (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965.

This will create duplicity of offences and the creation of two sets of laws governing the citizen of this country which goes against the equality and equal protection guarantees under the federal constitution.

Careful understanding and scrutiny must be made on the Bill.

We do not want a Bill that is slowly being introduced, part by part, and new laws being created which contravenes the federal constitution.

We do not want Parliament to be placed in a position when amendments on the constitution are being push through to allow the inception of certain laws that has been passed earlier.

We do not want a bill, that has been passed, to create a ripple effect that requires the amendment to the federal constitution.

Even matters concerning the conversion and custody of children from a civil marriage when one parent had converted, are yet to be settled.

Can we really afford to have another constitutional crisis which will again create apprehension amongst the people?

At times like this, let us look back and remind ourselves of the hope and intention of why Malaysia was formed.

Our forefathers had the vision to create a great nation with such diverse people with different race, culture and faith to live harmoniously together with respect, acceptance and understanding.

From the moment when Tunku Abdul Rahman broached the idea of forming “Mighty Malaysia” on May 27, 1961 to the birth of our nation on Sept 16, 1963, our federal constitution was drafted to embody such hope, intention and spirit.

We have gone through many struggles and overcome challenges since the formation of this nation more than 50 years ago, blessed by the virtue of our federal constitution as our guiding light and beacon of hope.

We have achieved so much together as one people and as a nation.

Let us continue to respect and protect the very foundation that has been laid by our founding fathers that has united us throughout these years.

Every federal lawmakers in this country have taken their oath to protect the federal constitution in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities of serving this country and its people.

I for one am determined to fulfill that oath. This is my resolve.

Much has been said about the overnment’s decision to move a motion supporting the Bill to be tabled.

This was a surprise to many, especially towards the components parties of BN.

Upko had always held true to the principle of “setia kawan” (friendship) in BN.

And we believe that a consensus decision, after hearing the opinions of each party which represent the various races in Malaysia, to be the best approach.

We must continue and protect this practice and principle so that we can overcome any challenges together as one people. This is Upko's prayer.

PAS, and for that matter all of us, need to tread carefully and not to to play with the religious sentiments of the people.

There is nothing sinister nor being disrespectful towards any religion in our stand here, but instead it is solely for the reason to protect and respect what we have fought so hard to maintain in this country, our very own unique identity among its citizen of different culture and faith, and that is being Malaysians.

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