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Ban-Reaction

IBRAHIM ALI COMES UNDER FIRE OVER REMARK ON BANNING LAWYERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- Gerakan and the DAP today criticised Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Ibrahim Ali over his proposal to ban practising lawyers from politics.

Gerakan vice president Dr S Vijayaranam said there was no reason why practising lawyers cannot hold political posts.

"There should not be any conflict of interest, as a lawyer trained in his profession should be able to distinguish work from his political convictions," he said in a statement.

DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang said banning lawyers from politics would be a dishonourable first for Malaysia in Commonwealth and even world history.

Lim said the government should explain why it gave Ibrahim the greenlight to consider legislation to ban lawyers from politics.

The DAP called on the government to direct Ibrahim to abandon all plans to ban lawyers from politics, which would be a grave denial of the civil rights of Malaysians regardless of their profession, Lim said.

Jelutong Member of Parliament and well-known lawyer Karpal Singh said Ibrahim should refrain from making public statements without the benefit of legal advice.

"The Attorney-General is the legal adviser to the government. In a matter so serious as barring lawyers from politics, any statement in relation to it should come from the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself, and not from some junior personality in the government," Karpal said in a statement.

Karpal, who is also DAP deputy chairman, said disqualifying lawyers from election to Parliament would not only mean amending the Legal Profession Act, but also amending Article 48 of the Federal Constitution which deals with disqualification of membership of Parliament.

"Likewise, State Constitutions would have to be amended accordingly. Amending the Federal and the State Constitutions, which require a 2/3 majority, is a most serious matter," he said.

The government should not regard lawyers as enemies of the nation or pests who should be discarded, Karpal said.

On Wednesday Ibrahim said the government was considering changing the law to bar lawyers from politics as it had received numerous complaints whether lawyers were abiding by their profession when they were also members of parliament or state legislative assemblies.

Ibrahim had said the government was ready to consider public opinion before deciding whether to amend the Legal Profession Act to bar lawyers from politics.

Ibrahim had said if lawyers holding political posts also handled cases involving politicians, this could be a breach of the Act.

-- BERNAMA

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