

'BN needs a history lesson on Ops Lalang'

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Selangor assemblypersons today tried to score political points by going down memory lane during a debate on a motion to urge the state government to conduct a campaign against the Internal Security Act 1960.

Debating the motion tabled by Hulu Kelang assemblyperson and two-time ISA detainee Saari Sungib for Selangor to actively campaign for the repeal of the ISA, BN's Sungai Pelek member Yap Ee Hwah recalled Malaysia's largest ISA crackdown - Ops Lalang - in 1987.

However, Yap's recollection of the events were different from that of PKR-Seri Setia's Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, who claimed to know his history better, despite being only five years old then.

Yap raised the issue of Ops Lalang to put the blame on the crackdown on then education minister (and now PKR de facto leader) Anwar Ibrahim.

"Do you know why it happened? At that time an education minister had used his powers to send officers who do not understand Mandarin to Chinese schools.

"The Chinese community, Chinese school administrations and parent-teacher associations objected, but the minister ignored them. Do you know who this person is?" he asked.

Admitting that the man referred to was Anwar, Nik Nazmi, however, corrected Yap by saying the officers were objected to not because they could not speak Mandarin, but because they were not educated in Chinese-medium schools.

Turning the tables on BN, the PKR communications chief asked Yap if he could remember the name of the Umno Youth leader who had "threatened to bathe the keris in Chinese blood", but was never arrested under the ISA.

"If Anwar was the youth chief, then his deputy was (now Prime Minister) Najib Abdul Razak. Maybe we need a history lesson on Ops Lalang," he retorted.

Nik Nazmi added that even if the ISA afforded detainees the opportunity to challenge their detention in court, it did not mean that this would be just "in spirit", since the judiciary was not necessarily fair.

The special, God-sent individual

Anwar's name was dragged into the debate again when BN-Permatang assemblyperson Sulaiman Abdul Razak said Malaysia had proven that its judiciary was independent, since a "special individual" had been allowed to use technicalities to drag his court case.

"If it was a normal citizen, his or her passport would surely be confiscated, but this special person... can even give ceramah (locally and abroad). This special individual was given this right by the government.

"He can even criticise the judge as he is God-sent," he said taking a jibe at PKR president Dr

Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who in a speech last year said her husband was a "gift from God".

Sulaiman also said the ISA afforded detainees their day in court, as several people have been released after the court ruled in their favour on their habeas corpus applications.

"This means that the detainees have a right (to be heard in court)," he said.

In his motion, Saari (right) urged the state government to actively campaign to get the ISA repealed, in accordance with Pakatan Rakyat's 100-day manifesto, by setting up a special committee to conduct awareness campaigns throughout Selangor.

He also called for funding to be allocated to put up billboards on the theme 'Save Malaysia: Repeal the ISA' in every Selangor state constituency.

Saari added that the ISA has been misused for political persecution, and that even though he had been detained over allegations that he was a risk to national security, he was only interrogated on his political involvement.

To this, Sulaiman said, "So, don't do things that threaten national security."

Sulaiman added that it is unreasonable to ask the state to fund the campaign and cost of billboards as not all taxpayers are against the ISA.

"Pakatan Rakyat always uses ISA in ceramah, in Twitter and on Facebook, which is free of charge. Whoever who wants to champion this should bear the costs themselves. Why use taxpayers' money? How much is this campaign, billboards going to cost?"

The motion was passed by majority vote of voice.

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