

'Umno never labelled Indians pariah'

Malaysiakini.com

May 4, 2011

A Penang Umno assemblyperson has vehemently denied that his party leaders or members had ever used a derogatory term for the Indian Malaysian community.

Debating the Yang di-Pertua Negeri's speech in the state legislative assembly today, Jasmin Mohammed (BN-Sungai Dua) denied that Umno had ever used the word 'pariah' to insult the Indians.

"Only the Indians have labelled themselves pariah," said Jasmin.

"Umno has never caused disunity among the races. It has made efforts to unite everyone... we have Chinese and Indians with us (in BN), but we are often blamed for all sorts of things."

The matter cropped up when RSN Rayer (DAP-Seri Delima, left) commented on the controversial Malay literature book 'Interlok' used in schools and blamed the BN for disuniting the people.

Surfacing several times during debate over the last two days, the issue of 'Interlok' continued to be a controversy despite the move to drop the word 'pariah' from the textbook.

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin had said that the word had sparked a firestorm of protests from the Indian Malaysian community.

Muhyiddin, who is also education minister, had said an independent panel set up to study the novel had agreed to replace the word 'pariah' with 'golongan yang sama' (the same group).

In response to Jasmin's denial, Rayer said only Indians from MIC used the term for people of their own race.

Speaker Abdul Halim Hussein moved to prevent a potential blow-up and told the members not to prolong the issue.

'Chinese are pendatang'

Unwilling to let up, Rayer asked Jasmin to come clean and admit that one of its leaders in Penang had previously called Chinese Malaysians immigrants.

He pressed Jasmin (left) to concede that the party's former Bukit Bendera chief, Ahmad Ismail, had made the controversial remark in a ceramah during the Permatang Pauh by-election in 2007.

"He said the Chinese are pendatang... true or not? Until today, Ahmad Ismail has yet to withdraw his statement," said Rayer.

"No action was taken against the one who called the Chinese immigrants, but the reporter who reported the matter was detained under the Internal Security Act."

The reporter who was detained, Tan Hoon Cheng from Sin Chew Daily, was released after 24 hours.

Then Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar said Tan was kept in police custody because "her safety was under threat".

Jasmin defended Ahmad, saying the Chinese daily had quoted the Ahmad selectively, leaving out other parts of his speech.

He urged Malaysians to remember their history as it is integral to their lives, and cautioned that history is

often politicised by certain quarters.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/163195>