

Azhar: Does Penang gov't support communism?

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Penang Opposition leader Azhar Ibrahim caused a minor furore in the state legislative assembly today when he asked if the Penang government supported communism.

30 PSM members were detained on June 26 under the Emergency Ordinance for 'waging war against the king', and were later charged under the Internal Security Act for being in possession of 'subversive' documents.

He questioned why the Seberang Perai Municipal Council (MPSP) had provided the toilets outside the Kepala Batas police station for the families of the detainees and whether the state endorsed the act.

These detainees were arrested while on a bus trip to Penang, and paraphernalia associated with communism were found in the vehicle.

They have since been released with discharges not amounting to acquittals.

"By providing the toilets, does it mean that the state government endorsed the struggle of PSM, a party that glorifies communism?" he asked, during his debate on the state government 2012 budget.

"If the state government endorses this, does it mean the state government is communist?" he asked.

This prompted Seri Delima assemblyperson RSN Rayer to demand a retraction from Azhar for his communism comment, which he described as "rude".

Rayer, a lawyer by profession, said Azhar's remarks were against the House's standard procedures and guidelines.

Retraction requested

Speaker Abdul Halim Hussein then asked Azhar to retract his words as he had made a wrong assumption about the state government.

"You cannot make such an assumption, you can just ask for clarification," Halim told Azhar.

"I withdraw the comment that the state government is a communist. But it supports communism," said Azhar, a withdrawal which the House speaker was not satisfied with.

"Okay I retract my statement but I want to ask is the state government a sympathiser of communists?" insisted Azhar, who told Pakatan representatives to respond to his question later during the chief minister's winding up speech.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister II P Ramasamy (right) said PSM is a legal party and registered with the government.

He said one could also question if the BN government supports communism since it signed a peace agreement with the defunct Communist Party of Malaya in 1989, in Haadyai.

"Several Umno leaders, including former premier Mahathir Mohammad and his one time deputy Musa Hitam, were also suspected of supporting the communists," he claimed.

"So can we say that the BN government also supports communism? It seems history has repeated itself," he added.

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