

Seksualiti Merdeka: Anwar slams double-standards
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by S Pathmawathy

Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim has questioned the apparent double standards given to two personalities with regards to participation in the controversial Seksualiti Merdeka event.

He hit at criticisms and the probe launched against civil rights proponent Ambiga Sreenevasan, saying that there were far more serious crimes for the police to act on.

“Why do you treat her like a common criminal, harassing her in this manner and (after) she explained her position?” asked Anwar.

He was referring to the police questioning of Ambiga yesterday for her involvement in the much-opposed event.

“It’s excessive... Why are you after Ambiga? The fitnah (slander) continues unabated... this is what we call the vulnerability of an ordinary citizen against the might of a corrupt government. I went through it, and now Ambiga,” he said at a press conference at Parliament today.

Ambiga (below, left), who is also the chairperson of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Election (Bersih 2.0) had been invited to officiate the programme, originally scheduled from Nov 9 to 13.

After a slew of protests by groups against the programme - aimed at raising awareness about the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, intersexual and queer (LGBTIQ) community - the police last week banned all public events related to the Seksualiti Merdeka.

Anwar pointed out that another prominent human rights activist, Marina Mahathir, was left unscathed, despite being a vocal supporter of the event that advocates human rights of people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.

“I’m not calling them (the police) to act on Marina (right) - you should respect her rights to express her views - but then people will see this discrepancy. If they want to discredit her, discredit in a proper argument, similarly with Ambiga.

“But I can’t understand you keep (investigating) her (Ambiga) for every single issue, which is clearly political,” added Anwar.

He noted that the organisers of the event had a right to expression, even if PKR in a recent meeting, had decided not endorse the event.

“The issue here is not whether to support or not to support. The issue is you attack them. That’s something else. Can’t we talk about things in this country?” he said.

kua kia soong new book launching patriot and pretender 240911 pkr surendranPKR vice-president N Surendran, meanwhile, also slammed what he said was the clear and cynical extension of Umno and BN’s campaign of misinformation against Ambiga and Bersih 2.0 coalition.

We note that Umno/BN continues to rely on police powers and coercion when faced by legitimate dissent and differences, thus impeding and retarding our national discourse,” said Surendran in a statement.

He called upon the home minister and the inspector general of police to immediately cease all police investigations and harassment against Seksualiti Merdeka organiser Pang Kee Theik, Ambiga and fellow activists Irene Fernandez and Maria Chin; and to lift the ban on Seksualiti Merdeka.

Seksualiti Merdeka, had been organised annually since 2008 without any untoward incidences until now, its fourth instalment.

Concerned over the security threats, the organisers had agreed to put off the event pending a meeting with the police officials but rebuked the police for banning them instead of acting against the mobs.

Why go after Ambiga, and not Marina?

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