

Police quiz Bar Council head on Seksualiti Merdeka
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by Koh Jun Lin

Police today questioned Bar Council chairperson Lim Chee Wee on the council's role as one of the organisers of the banned Seksualiti Merdeka festival.

Lim was accompanied by the council's office bearers and his lawyer throughout the 25-minute session, during which an officer, identified as 'Supt Munusamy', recorded his statement under Section 112 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Speaking to reporters outside the Jalan Duta Court Complex police station, where he gave his statement, Lim (left) said the police should better use their resources by going after criminals.

"I believe the police have over-reacted to the situation by banning all the Seksualiti Merdeka events.

"You can make any number of police reports about an incident, but ultimately it will have to be a court of law that will decide whether any laws have been broken," he said.

Lim asserted that the freedom to assemble and express guaranteed by federal constitution are for all citizens, including minorities, and "we must be mature and learn to accept that".

The issue of Seksualiti Merdeka is a matter of discrimination and harassment, not whether one is in favour of homosexuality or not.

'It's about people learning about the law'

"Where the Malaysian Bar is concerned, our involvement is about people learning about the law, people learning about what is contained in our laws, and people discussing about how, if at all, the laws can be transformed," he said.

He pointed out the council's efforts against the Internal Security Act as an example, which Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has promised would be abolished next year.

Lim also asked whether the police ban on Seksualiti Merdeka was consistent with Najib's call for a "global movement of moderates", pointing out also that some elements of the media had misled the public about the nature of the festival.

Seksualiti Merdeka is a series of talks, workshops and film screenings and stage performances on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual issues and has been annually held in the country since 2008.

This year's event was slated to run from Nov 9 to 13, but it was banned before it could begin, after protests from a number of groups, including Pembela, which called on the Bar Council's office bearers to step down.

The council's office in Lebuhr Pasar in the Kuala Lumpur city centre was also vandalised with red paint on Nov 4, which Lim believes is connected to the Bar's support for Seksualiti Merdeka.

Police have also questioned former Bar Council chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan, who was slated to officially launch the festival, and one of the Seksualiti Merdeka coordinators, Pang Khee Teik

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