

Butt dance 'sexist', decries Ambiga
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By Hazlan Zakaria

Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan has decried what she agrees are elements of sexual harassment in the 'butt dance' by a group of armed forces veterans in front of her house.

"There is, yes. I think because I am a woman, that has a lot to play with what they were doing outside my house. It is sexist... the bully mentality," Ambiga (*left*) told *Malaysiakini* in an exclusive interview yesterday.

She was referring to an incident on Tuesday, when a group claiming to be from the Malaysian Armed Forces Veterans Association (PVTM) bent over and waved their buttocks in the direction of her house, and then held a short demonstration after their rear-end calisthenics.

The participants claimed that their posterior articulations were to protest against Ambiga for being an "enemy of the nation who had smeared the country's name".

"It's a total infringement of my privacy. It is intimidating if you look at some parts of the video. Ten men standing in front of someone's house, what do you think? I think it is shocking behaviour," Ambiga lambasted.

Puzzled at where the protesters got the idea for their bizarre exercise, she admitted to being shocked by the "sheer insensitivity" of their actions, labelling it as "pretty repulsive".

Asked why she went out to greet the protesters and offered them a drink, Ambiga joked that she was trying to follow Mahatma Gandhi's footsteps.

"I was trying to do the Gandhian thing. You respond with (kindness to those against you). I don't have a quarrel with people generally, you offer a hand in friendship.

"It was my way of responding to it, I shall respond similarly if they come again outside of my gates again."

'Down the slippery slope'

She also referred to the statement by deputy police chief Khalid Abu Bakar who said that legally there is nothing wrong with the military veterans' butt exertions.

Khalid condoning the actions, she warned, will lead down the slippery slope that will encourage "a dangerous trend" for people to demonstrate in front of other people's houses.

When told that a group of traders are opening a thosai stall in front of the deputy IGP's house, she pointed out that this was the Pandora's Box that she warned about.

“Well they can't stop it now. They said it is all right.”

However, Ambiga praised the police for deploying a six-member team to her house during the military veterans' posterior postulations and police patrol cars doing rounds in the area to check on her house from time to time.

“I appreciate that, but I do think that the deputy IGP is wrong.”

But in the end, Ambiga said, she would leave it to the court of public opinion to be the final judge, as the authorities seem to condone such behaviour.

The outpouring of public support via SMS, social media and bouquets of yellow flowers sent to her house, she said, speaks volumes.

The lawyer also argued that such events, silly as they are, serve as “voter education”.

“Is this the Malaysia you want? Would you vote for people who support this? Is this the Malaysian way?”

‘I am not moving out’

On a personal level, Ambiga hit out at what she sees as an attack that has crossed the line against her “personal space and safety” as well as putting her home and family at risk.

She described incidents such as people driving to her house shouting her name and driving off, and some jokingly stopping to ask if there were burgers for sale after the series of protests at her house, starting with the [burger protest](#) last week, led to people knowing her home address.

“My concern always is the family, my children, my husband. We have to take extra security precautions. There is a cost (of doing what I do). You have to deal with it. I try the best that I can.”

Ambiga related that some people suggested that she moves out, but she remains adamant that relocating is not an option.

"Are you kidding? This is my house, I am not going to move out. I will take measures but I am not moving out."

But despite the turn of events, she remains positive that she is on the right path and does not regret her actions in fighting for clean and fair elections.

She said that while she is flattered that she is being targeted by those who want to intimidate her and stop Bersih, she maintained that the movement is bigger than her and will proceed nonetheless.

“I wouldn't do anything different. I don't know how to do anything different,” Ambiga said.

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