

PKR: Ops Cantas a 'PR exercise' using archaic law

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The Ops Cantas appears to be a "public relations exercise" by the police, resulting in mass "random arrests" under an "antiquated" law, PKR said.

"I am concerned for public safety. This is an attempt by the police to show they are doing something about crime.

NONE "If they are engaged in a public relations attempt then the real criminals don't get caught," PKR vice-president N Surendran (right) told reporters.

The lawyer added that by using the little known Prevention of Crime Act 1959, the authorities are "attempting to punish" those randomly picked up by holding them for more than 70 days without charge.

He added that the remand period under the PCA is excessive, considering the offences for which police claim the individuals are being picked up in Ops Cantas.

"Under the Criminal Procedure Code, even a murder suspect is only remanded for 14 days. Fourteen days is adequate to carry out an investigation and bring down the crime rate. We don't have to rely on the (PCA)," he said.

Surendran, who is also Padang Serai MP, said that the PCA is "inappropriate" as it was enacted to place people on a register and to restrict their movements like the Restricted Residence Act 1933.

"Why use a variation of the Restricted Residence Act if you have done away with this Act?" he asked, noting that the arrest of close to 700 people over a weekend is "unprecedented".

'Risk of magistrates rubberstamping PCA applications'

He added that there is also the risk of magistrates "rubberstamping" PCA applications for remand, so long as procedures are adhered to, regardless of whether there is justification for further remand.

The PCA requires a magistrate to issue remand orders at three points of the maximum 71 days of remand allowed.

"Habeas corpus writs should be filed all over the country now," said the criminal lawyer.

He also questioned what the individuals will be brought to court for, as the PCA does not provide for a full trial.

Instead, the PCA states that an inquiry officer is supposed to investigate the matter and come up with a report on whether the accused should be placed on a register for criminals under the Act.

The report is then sent to the home minister who will then determine whether this person should be put under restriction at a specified location for five years.

Inspector-general of police Khalid Abu Bakar said that those remanded under Ops Cantas will be charged in court.

Police say individuals are picked up in Ops Cantas for several offences, including possession of weapons and drugs.

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