

Gov't vow to abolish Sedition Act questioned
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Putrajaya has applied the Sedition Act 1949 against at least eight political opponents since pledging to abolish the law, which has long been accused of being a powerful tool to stifle dissent.

This was concluded by the Malaysians for Beng Hock movement, who noted that the latest application of the law was the sedition conviction obtained against DAP chairperson Karpal Singh.

The group said although Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had pledged in July 2012 to replace the law with a National Harmony Act, the Sedition Act was consistently applied in a "bi-monthly" basis ever since.

Among those who have been charged or investigated under the Sedition Act since March 2013 are student activist Adam Adli Abdul Halim, PKR vice-president Tian Chua, PAS member Tamrin Ghafar, activist Haris Ibrahim, Suaram secretariat member Cynthia Gabriel and Catholic Priest Andrew Lawrence.

"The Najib government has not only failed in delivery of its promise of reformation, yet worse it tightened the grip to suppress dissidents.

"Ironically, the extreme racist and religious intimidation by other Malay rights and Muslim NGOs such as Perkasa went on unpunished even if these actions had violated Criminal Procedure code.

"The enforcement agencies have been concluded to practice two separate laws for the pro-government and opposition groups," said Malaysians for Beng Hock spokesperson Ng Yap Hwa.

In view of this, Ng said his group is calling for Putrajaya to immediately abolish the Sedition Act in order to uphold democratic principles and that Najib must prove that he is beyond the application of democratic window dressing.

According to *de facto* Law Minister Nancy Shukri, the National Harmony Bill is still "raw" or the infancy stage, and did not provide a time frame for the tabling of the law.

She said told *The Star* in an interview published on Jan 19 that there are existing laws which overlaps with the provisions in the Bill and those have to be identified and studied.