

Bersih rues Sedition Act usage to quash dissent

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The electoral reform group Bersih has expressed concerned over the “long list” of persons recently charged under the Sedition Act, saying that it is undemocratic.

“There is a clear and ongoing escalation in the use of the Sedition Act to stifle anything perceived to be even the slightest challenge to the prevailing political status quo.

“This is profoundly antithetical to democracy, which thrives on a robust flow of ideas and information,” it said in a statement yesterday.

That statement came after Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad was charged under the Sedition Act yesterday, while Seri Delima assemblyperson RSN Rayer is due to be charged and Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli is due to be investigated under the same act today.

Also charged under the same law recently, Bersih pointed out, are Padang Serai MP N Surendran, activist Adam Adli Abdul Halim, Batu MP Chua Tian Chang, Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (Isma) president Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman, and Seputeh MP Teresa Kok.

The group said government suppression of ideas and opinions violates the right of citizens to make informed choices, including at the ballot box, and called for the abolition of the Sedition Act.

“We must trust that communities of people are capable of deciding for themselves how to deal with disagreements and debate, short of hate speech or incitements to violence,” it said.

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