

'Impose moratorium on Sedition Act if PM sincere'

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Former Bar Council president Ambiga Sreenevasan said the government should impose a moratorium on charges under the Sedition Act to prove it is serious about repealing the Act.

"If there's a moratorium, then you can take 20 years to repeal the Act. Just don't charge anyone," Ambiga said.

She was speaking at the launch of the Bar Council's National Young Lawyers Committee's (NYLC) #MansuhAktaHasutan campaign last night.

The year-long campaign to push for the abolition of the Sedition Act follows a spate of charges under the Act over the past month.

Ambiga had earlier requested Global Movement of Moderates chief executive officer Saifuddin Abdullah to arrange a meeting between the Bar Council, NYLC and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak on the matter.

On a separate matter, when asked whether there was a possibility for the campaign to go to the streets following the spate of charges, Ambiga said she "suspected" that the need for a walk would come "soon".

"We know people are suffering daily; it is unlike any other situation that the country has ever faced.

"I suspect that the need for a walk will come sooner, rather than later," she said.

Meanwhile, NYLC chairperson Syahredzan Johan said there is no plan at present for the campaign to take to the streets.

However, Syahredzan promised, "If it comes to that, then we will be walking.

"You can be sure that NYLC will be there on the streets, standing behind (Bar Council president) Christopher Leong."

'Abuse of power'

Ambiga said that the campaign was not simply about abolishing the Act.

"It is about containing the unbridled power (of the authorities) and halting the abuse of that power.

"Why does the government charge people under the Sedition Act? Because it can."

She then hit out at the government, claiming that the use of the Act against MPs was an attack on parliamentary democracy.

"They choose to decapitate opposition MPs using the Sedition Act. That is utter disrespect of the people's vote," she said.

Adding that the campaign was about making society and the country's leaders more humane, Ambiga said: "We are asking our leaders to treat our citizens with respect.

"Many call this Operation Lalang 2. But we are no lalang. We are going to stand up to this."

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