

A promise is a commitment, Najib told

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The Malaysian Bar said that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak should carry out the repeal of the Sedition Act, even if has to be done through difficult circumstances.

“A promise is a commitment to carry through a matter despite difficult circumstances, and not only when it is convenient to do so.

“The Malaysian Bar is further appalled that the prime minister is not only reneging on the promise he made two years ago to repeal the Sedition Act 1948, but that he intends to 'strengthen' it.

“It is ludicrous that Malaysians would not only be prohibited from discussing and debating issues of public and national interest, or constitutional matters, but would be criminally punished for doing so. This is highly oppressive, and represents a lurch towards authoritarianism,” said Malaysian Bar president Christopher Leong in a press statement today.

He was responding to Najib’s (right) speech at the Umno General Assembly yesterday where the latter was quoted as saying the Sedition Act is here to stay.

Leong said that it is delusional to imagine that such draconian legislation would foster national peace and harmony.

“It is folly to think that the Sedition Act 1948 is our answer to maintaining and promoting peace and harmony. There is nothing in the history of the Sedition Act 1948 and its use - either previously or currently - that supports any such notion,” said Leong.

'Fueling disharmony'

Instead, Leong warned that the maintenance of the Sedition Act 1948 will only fuel disharmony.

Leong said the country should be honest about what is the genuine cause of disharmony in Malaysia.

"In many instances, disharmony in Malaysia arises from insecurity, the exploitation of such insecurity, and the inability or unwillingness to deal with questions, criticisms or differing views in a mature manner," he said.

He added there are quarters which are exploiting this insecurity and resorting to scare-mongering and threats of violence in response to criticism or differing views.

"These people are not brought to account by the law. Instead, the Sedition Act 1948 is used against the persons who raise questions, concerns or criticisms.

"In maintaining the Sedition Act 1948, we would be playing into the hands of, and caving to, pressure by these irresponsible quarters," he said.

Leong (left) also asked whether other national leaders who had previously endorsed the Sedition Act's repeal, will remain committed to their stance.

"Will they take the easy option or do the right thing instead?" he said.

Leong stressed that the draconian law should be done away with and replaced with a national harmony legislation.

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