

Anwar flays MCC for using Islam to defend racism
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Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim condemned certain quarters which use Islam to defend “racism and gross injustice”, describing it as an insult to the religion and Muslim community.

He rejected the notion that Malay survival or Islam’s relevance would be threatened by respecting freedom of expression and human rights.

This is however being whipped up by right-wing groups, lamented Anwar in his speech at the launch of the Penang Local Democracy Report, organised by Suaram last night.

The report, first of its kind in Penang, was presented by Suaram executive director Yap Swee Seng.

Anwar said Pakatan Rakyat leaders had met the night before and discussed the plan by an ultra-Malay group - Malay Consultative Council - to hold a massive rally in Bukit Jalil on Jan 10.

Among others, the group supported the retention of the 1948 Sedition Act, recently announced by Prime Minister Najib Razak at Umno’s General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur last month.

Najib was forced by the party to make an about-turn on the law which he promised to repeal two years ago.

“It’s a free country but I was appalled to find the attempt to rationalise the defence of draconian laws and the protection of royalty, despite all the excesses, by using ‘maqasid syariah’,” said the Permatang Pauh MP.

‘Maqasid syariah’ means “the higher objective of Islamic law”.

“It is not just hudud (Islamic criminal law) or cutting and chopping of limbs where justice, sanctity of life, equality, humanitarian concerns and ideals are ignored,” said Anwar.

“How can you use ‘maqasid syariah’ to defend racism?”

Anwar described as “timely” the proposal by 25 eminent Malays, comprising top retired civil servants and individuals, who sent an open letter to Prime Minister Najib Razak urging him to improve his leadership and allow a consultative process, especially on issues involving Islamic law.

Title stripped because of 'Allah'

Anwar also broached the subject of Selangor sultan's recent withdrawal of his 'Datuk Seri' title, but was quick to add that he did not intend to fuss on the matter.

He is still carries the title as he has seven others conferred to him by other state rulers.

"That is not important but the reason given for the withdrawal was that I did not defend Islam," Anwar sighed.

He suggested that the reason for the withdrawal may be over his "uncompromising" stand on the use of the word 'Allah' by non-Muslims.

"Based on classical text and religious authorities, I would like to reiterate my stand, uncompromisingly, that there is no right for any Muslim or authority to deny the use of the word 'Allah' by anyone," Anwar said.

"That has caused me one datukship," he said to loud applause from the 100-odd crowd who attended the event held at the Hin Bus Company Depot along Jalan Gudwara.

Last night's event is part of the annual Local Democracy Festival, supported by the Penang Youth Development Cooperative, Machang Bubok Flood Mitigation Action Group and its assemblyman Lee Khai Loon, and Penang Stop Human Trafficking Campaign.