

'IGP arrogant to shut down Najib forum'

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By Terence Netto

MP for Padang Serai N Surendran (photo) denounced the action of the police in stopping a public forum in Kuala Lumpur yesterday that was called to discuss the 1MDB issue.

“This is the latest instance of the arrogance of power under the baton of an inspector-general of police who mistakes imagined threats to national security for real menaces to the country which include corrupt police in border security and wanton cops in custodial deaths,” said the PKR politburo member.

He urged IGP Khalid Abu Bakar not to hold up the force to 'public derision that actions such as regulating public discourse would invite and to focus instead on tackling personnel involved in corruption and negligence'.

He said the police had no business to impose themselves on the public forum on 1MBD that was organised by an NGO with the aim of obtaining from prime minister candid answers to recurrent questions about the way the sovereign wealth fund, which is RM42 billion in debt, is being run.

“The management of 1MBD is an issue of paramount public interest and a forum in which the fund's chief minder had consented to be present to clear away public misgivings was something of an advance in the practice of our democracy, rare though that is,” said the human rights lawyer.

'Revive police credibility'

“For the prime minister not to turn up and for the floor, by default, to be given to the fund's most trenchant critic, Dr Mahathir Mohamed, was yet another advance on democracy, though that point would be lost on both defaulter and critic,” noted the parliamentarian.

The first-term MP urged the police not to encroach on domains that are the 'natural arenas of democratic expression and concentrate instead on reviving the credibility of a force as impartial enforcers and arbiters'.

“We need a police force of neutral professionals who disdain the temptation of being partisans in arenas where they have neither the warrant nor the expertise to weigh-in on the discussion,” argued Surendran.

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