

Suhakam blasts sexist MPs
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Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) has added their voice against the sexist remarks made by Jasin MP Mohd Said Yusof and Kinabatangan MP Bung Mokhtar Radin.

In a statement yesterday, the commission said that any remark that strips a person of his or her dignity is a violation of the fundamental right to human dignity.

The commission was referring to a remark made by the two parliamentarians, during debate last week on the lack of maintenance resulting in leaks in the Parliament building after heavy downpours.

"Where's the leak? The Batu Gajah MP leaks every month too," Bung said referring to the DAP representative of the constituency, Fong Po Kuan, who had raised the issue.

The statement said the crude, offensive and sexist remarks had attacked Fong's dignity.

The commission also said that parliamentarians should provide good examples by respecting the dignity of others as they are representatives of the people and leaders of the nation.

"Suhakam notes that some MPs supported the derogatory, sexist remarks of the two MPs by cheering when the remarks were made or by rebutting that they were mere use of words," it stated.

When the issue arose, Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has said the remarks were not supposed to be taken seriously and that there were certain parties out to make a big deal of the issue.

Not a personal attack

Meanwhile, de facto law minister Nazri Aziz said he did not find the choice of words used by both to be offensive.

Tangga Batu MP Idris Haron added his view that when such things are said in Parliament, "we take them as a joke, not a personal attack."

"Suhakam urges the MPs who stripped fellow MP Fong Po Kuan of her human dignity and other MPs to uphold at all times the dignity of others especially in Parliament where they exercise their freedom of expression," read the statement.

"Freedom of speech is a human right but it also comes with the responsibility that one does not abuse this right by using it to ridicule, defame, harm mental health and create public disorder," it added.

Both Mohd Said and Bung Mokhtar had apologised to "all women in the country offended by the remarks" following a meeting with Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil yesterday.

However they defended their words used in the Dewan as necessary to defend the government

during debates.

They also did not issue a personal apology to Batu Gajah MP Fong Po Kuan, against whom the sexist remarks were aimed at last week.

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