

Police hound DAP S'wak chit-chat session
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DAP Sarawak's 'Land and Rakyat' seminar turned chit-chat session last night was dogged by the presence of plainclothes police and riot cops, who staked out the coffee shop where the event took place.

chong chieng jen interview 141108 01 "We held a consultation session with the people. We came early and saw about ten plainclothes police there. One of them had a video recorder," said Bandar Kuching MP Chong Chieng Jen (left) when Malaysiakini contacted him today.

"I had dinner (there) just before the event. They even took a recording of me eating chicken rice," quipped Chong.

More ominously, added the DAP parliamentarian, was the presence of two FRU trucks parked by the roadside nearby.

The party's planned seminar was scuttled when the police decided at the eleventh hour not to issue a permit for the gathering, claiming "traffic flow" concerns, but they decided to press ahead to hold the casual chit-chat session with the rakyat instead.

DAP S'wak chit-chat session Chong said the police's reasons for denying them the permit did not hold water, as the coffee house is located in an area where traffic is sparse.

While no incidents precipitated, the police recorded the entire proceedings as DAP representatives mingled with the crowd, talking to them and distributing pamphlets about the land issues in Sarawak.

Misplaced efficiency

Chong said that despite the police 'harrasment', the event did meet its objectives.

"We managed to raise the awareness of the public about land issues in Sarawak. We went table to table talking to them and giving leaflets. Quite a fair bit of people turned up," he said.

DAP S'wak chit-chat session He said they managed to distribute 250 pamphlets to the people at the restaurant and passers-by, saying although the restaurant was packed, he was unsure if they came specifically for the talk.

The DAP leader added that he felt the police presence has in fact backfired and highlighted the strong-arm tactics of the present government.

"The people are more angry, with this suppression by the police," he said.

He said the police had over-reacted to their peaceful assembly, adding that the energy spent by the force to monitor their event could have been better spent serving the public.

"The vigilance and efficiency manifested by the police last night, I hope they can apply that to tackling crime and maintaining security. If they do that then I think that Sarawak would be a safer place," he said.

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