

**Khalid: Information belongs to the people**  
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The Selangor government sees itself as being merely a depository of information as a 'state asset' with the people being the ultimate beneficiaries.

Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim said this in his speech entitled "Freedom of Information (FOI) and Investment" at the 15th Malaysian Law Conference yesterday.

"Voters should be empowered with information as they ultimately decide who they vote for based on it," he said.

He added that as MB, he had declassified state documents under Section 2c of the Official Secrets Act (OSA) such as a state reforestation programme, abandoned housing projects in Kuala Selangor and Selayang, and the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide...even before the FOI became law.

Khalid law conference speech 300710 KhalidFrom a business point of view, khalid (left) said that the Selangor government believed that greater FOI encourages fair competition while providing a better environment for making business decisions.

"Studies have shown that ethical corporations practising FOI get higher ratings and better share prices than corporations that are indifferent to it."

He also announced the formation of an FOI Select Committee, comprising young and capable assemblypersons, which will consult with a wide cross-section of society for suggestions that could improve the current draft enactment.

'Foolish' water agreement

Having been chided by certain PKR colleagues for lacking 'political savvy', Khalid remained defiant, placing stress on results instead.

"While many of us may be disillusioned with politics, I am optimistic that the long term trend indicates that change is taking place despite slight setbacks."

The BN government was not left out as he slammed its appeal against a court decision - ordering the federal government to disclose the audit report on water company Syabas and the concession agreement signed between the federal and state governments and Syabas - which has since been granted, as "foolish".

"This is a prime example of where information should never have been classified in the first place. To say this is protection of national interest is ridiculous and it is clear only 'certain parties' are being protected at the expense of the people."

'I'm not sotong'

The former Permodalan Nasional Berhad chief executive officer opined that Malaysians have allowed the culture of obscurity to influence them into thinking that state secrets are the norm.

"I am referring, of course, to the many restrictive laws of the country that continue to

threaten an open society, namely the OSA 1950, the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, the Sedition Act 1948 and the Internal Security Act 1960."

Khalid law conference speech 300710 George Varughese & Khalid Provoking amusement, Khalid said that he was not a sotong, referring to Paul the octopus of World Cup fame, in response to Bar Council honorary secretary George Varughese's (left in photo) question on the opposition coalition's chances in the next general election.

When approached outside the hall after his speech, he said the decision to hold an election would rely on how it would benefit the Pakatan.

"Most of us in PR prefer a term of at least four years but we will still keep our cards to ourselves.

"If it is in our favour, we will have one. If it doesn't favour us, we don't necessarily have to."

The FOI enactment was tabled for its first reading in the Selangor state assembly on July 14.

The bill seeks to create the post of one information officer for every department to assist the public access the documents sought for.

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