

**Umno agitators harass Penang vigil attendees**  
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The highly tense atmosphere of last night's aborted anti-ISA vigil at the Penang Speaker's Square saw at least two peripheral incidents by provocateurs, which fortunately stopped short of escalating.

penang isa vigil 010810 pro isa gangIn the first incident, well-known local activist Ong Boon Keong claimed he was bullied by a group of young men (right) who wanted to "impose their ways (on him) through brute force" while he was waiting to participate in the vigil.

Ong said he arrived at the event about half an hour before the scheduled vigil at 9pm, but noticed that a large group of police had cordoned off the entrance to the Esplanade, a popular tourist spot.

He claimed he witnessed a group of "fierce looking and foul-mouthed people" in their 30s or 40s marching towards the scattered crowd at the field.

"They didn't look like the anti-ISA civil society type. I could not resist taking a photo of them (below). That (drew their attention) in my direction," he said.

Penang pro-ISA thugs taken by Ong Boon Keong"I sat down on a part of the concrete fencing at the edge of the field, pretending to adjust my camera. Some members of the group spoke in Bahasa Malaysia and instigated one another to do something about me," he added.

"Then one of them emboldened himself and came to sit next to me. He pretended to speak on his handphone but moved his elbow until it touched my face and muttered 'Mau cari pasal? Mau cari pasal?' (Are you looking for a fight?)."

Ong believes the man was trying to pick a fight with him, instigated by a few others from the "fierce-looking" group.

When Ong slowly moved away from the man, avoiding eye contact with him, the latter "declared his victory" by laughing with his friends and threatened further to pull Ong's beard.

Ong, who is currently involved in an election watchdog group and conducts new voter registration exercises in rural Sarawak, questioned why none of the group, who then pushed their way into the peaceful anti-ISA crowd, had been apprehended by the police.

Special rights for thugs?

penang isa vigil 010810 kris and choo choon kai arrested"Why did the police act against peaceful citizens but allow those who openly and blatantly instigate violence to go free?" asked Ong.

"Didn't the police understand Bahasa Malaysia (and understand the groups' taunts)? Or had they been given a different set of instructions when it comes to upholding law and order on this special class of people?" he quipped.

In another incident, a similar group had reportedly tried to cause trouble with the anti-ISA

protestors before the police dispersed the 100-odd crowd waiting for the vigil to begin.

The group, who claimed to be pro-ISA supporters, was identified by several participants to be linked to Umno.

penang isa vigil 010810 ong jing cheng arrestedBut Georgetown district police chief Gan Kong Meng, who admitted knowledge of the presence of the troublemakers, said they were not arrested as they had complied with orders and did not put up a fight when the police told them to disperse.

Gan instead ordered the arrests of activist Kris Khaira and his father, lawyer Darshan Singh Khaira, Suaram coordinator Ong Jing Cheng (left) and PSM central committee member Choo Chon Kai under the pretext of an illegal gathering.

They have been released under police bail after giving their statements at the Jelutong police station, and are to report back on Aug 14.

Whither the YBs?

Meanwhile, Gerakan member Dalbinder Singh questioned why several local politicians did not take the lead in the anti-ISA protest.

Dalbinder, a law student who frequents the Speakers Square on a weekly basis, said he had approached the YBs after the arrests, to ask them why they were allegedly not present earlier when the vigil was about to start.

He complained that the assemblypersons, among them Liew Chin Tong (Bukit Bendera), Ng Wei Aik (Komtar), Koid Teng Guan (Sungai Pinang) and Koay Teng Hai (Ayer Itam), should have fronted the vigil instead of allowing the protestors to risk police arrest.

NONEDalbinder is upset that one of them, Komtar assemblyperson Ng (right), had ticked him off for raising the matter telling him, "Don't make trouble, behave yourself."

"I felt he shouldn't have said that. He could have explained to me in a better way. After all, how often do I get to meet a people's representative like Ng?" he said.

"I just needed to express myself, and I felt my question was valid," he added.

The YBs were earlier spotted in the field mingling with many NGO activists who had gathered to participate in the vigil, although several had arrived later to join the crowd.

The latecomers had explained that there were several other events they had to attend before heading for the vigil at the Speaker's Square.

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