

DAP, Gerakan unite to condemn arrests of activists
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It is not often that you find the DAP and Gerakan, two opposing parties, agreeing on a common issue but the arrests of anti-ISA protestors in Penang on Sunday night saw both condemning the police for practicing "double standards".

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the state regretted the incident at the Speaker's Square on Sunday night where 180 police personnel were mobilised to disperse about 100 protestors.

Authorities also arrested three activists and a lawyer for allegedly not dispersing within five minutes as ordered by the police.

Lim (left), who is DAP national secretary-general, said he knew the directive to arrest the protestors came from inspector-general of police Musa Hassan but asked why the police were only targeting the anti-ISA protestors.

"Even if the police wanted to arrest the protestors, they should have tried to also arrest those who disrupted the protests and the pro-ISA supporters," he said at a press conference yesterday at the Penang Development Corporation building.

"I think that the police action on Sunday night does not give a very good impression of their impartiality," added Lim.

Penang pro-ISA thugs taken by Ong Boon Keong Lim expressed deep regret that the incident had taken place at the Speaker's Square where the space is provided for freedom of speech.

Participation from the public at the Speaker's Square, launched on May 4 as a symbol of free speech at the Esplanade, has been increasing steadily over the weeks.

However it is yet too early to gauge whether the recent police arrests have put a damper on the growing interest in the space, an idea mooted by local civil society groups.

"We hope the police, federal government and the Home Ministry can demonstrate that there is indeed freedom of speech," he said.

"Or else, this would not put Malaysia in a very good light," he added.

penang isa vigil 010810 kris and choo choon kai arrested Meanwhile, state Gerakan legal and human rights bureau chairperson Baljit Singh said it was unfortunate that the anti-ISA event on Sunday was also attended by "unwelcomed guests who have the purpose of finding fault".

Baljit said the authority should take immediate and swift action against the fault-finders professionally, and not practice double standards.

"The authorities should also respect freedom of expression. The public should be encouraged and allowed to voice their opinions on policies and laws through peaceful means," he said.

"This is consistent with the spirit of democracy and inclusion of the people in the process of nation building" he added.

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