

Speaker refuses query on Utusan's May 13 article
Malaysiakini.com
November 11, 2010

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia today rejected a question on Utusan Malaysia's inflammatory editorial piece yesterday which called for May 13, 1969 to be recognised as an "auspicious day".

deputy home minister abu seman pc on teen shooting panel 300410 02The incident occurred after Deputy Home Minister Abu Seman Yusop (left) had finished replying to queries from Shamsul Anuar Nasarah (BN-Lenggong) on matters related to regulation of the printing presses.

Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur) then asked a supplementary question on what action has been taken against Utusan Malaysia for its racially tinged articles, particularly the editorial piece on May 13 yesterday.

"Isn't this seditious in nature and dangerous? Shouldn't it be studied by the ministry? What is the minister's view and BN's view? Can we expect a serious attitude in condemning the article?" demanded Lim.

Pandikar replied that there was no need for Abu Seman to entertain the question, as his understanding was that Lim was asking for the deputy minister's personal view.

"This has nothing to do with the ministry. It's an hypothetical question. I will not allow this question. I don't want it," said Pandikar despite Lim repeatedly stressing that he was stating a fact.

"I understand but your question is referring to his political opinion which is nothing to do with the ministry," stressed Pandikar.

No revocation of permits

The editorial piece yesterday had sparked an uproar with the DAP leadership ranks because they were blamed for the 1969 racial riots and the daily also suggested that the date should be "celebrated" as the start of the New Economic Policy.

Earlier, Abu Seman told the House that 19 publications have been reprimanded by the Home Ministry for violating the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) 1984 this year.

Abu Seman said these publications have either been advised, warned or given a show cause letter, but none of their printing permits have been revoked.

He said that this shows that the government does not infringe on press freedom.

Abu Seman said that the PPPA will only be invoked if a publication tries to influence the public with "harmful thoughts" that could be detrimental to public safety.

He said this in replying Shamsul Anuar's question whether the ministry was satisfied with news articles carried by newspapers and magazines that sometimes appear to defy the country's laws.

Shamsul had also asked for the disclosure of the Home Ministry's methodology in monitoring newspapers, magazines or the media to ensure publications adhere to the ministry's regulations.

Sedition Act last resort

In his supplementary question, Shamsul asked how the ministry monitors party organs such as PKR's Suara Keadilan, PAS' Harakah as well as Chinese and Tamil language dailies which he claims raise sensitive issues.

"If the home ministry is unhappy and all other measures including revocation of permit is already undertaken, we will take action under the Sedition Act, if it is deemed serious," said Abu Seman in reply.

Abu Seman added that the ministry has granted licences to 78 publications - 48 in the peninsula, 13 in Sabah and 18 in Sarawak - in various languages.

Among these publications, 18 are in Bahasa Malaysia, 19 in English, 29 in Chinese and 10 in the Punjabi and Tamil languages.

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