

Pak Lah told to free Hindraf 5
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Malaysia's opposition on Friday pressed for five ethnic Indian activists, including a man who won in recent elections, to be freed from indefinite detention under a tough security law.
MCPX

Lawyer Manoharan Malayalam, standing for the Democratic Action Party (DAP), was elected from his jail - soundly beating the government incumbent in the state seat on March 8.

parliament ipcmc roundtable talk 281207 kit siangDAP leader Lim Kit Siang said Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should free the five, leaders of rights group Hindraf, who were detained last December under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

They had organised an unprecedented mass rally claiming discrimination against ethnic Indians in November. Police used tear gas, water cannon and baton charges to break up the protest, which drew at least 8,000 people.

Lim called for the "immediate and unconditional release (of) the five Hindraf leaders from ISA detention as proof that Abdullah has 'heard the voice' of Malaysians to start the process of 'national healing' after... the general election."

Abdullah's Barisan Nasional coalition won the election on March 8 but with a reduced majority and lost an unprecedented five states to the three-party opposition alliance of the DAP, the Islamic PAS and PKR.

It was the ruling party's worst election result since 1969.

Swearing-in in detention centre

Lim said the election result showed that ethnic Indian support for the government had plunged.

Manoharan's lawyer Karpal Singh told AFP he had filed an appeal to the Federal Court, the highest in the land, after the High Court last month rejected a freedom bid by the five.

m manoharanManoharan will be sworn in as a state assemblyman in the detention centre if he was not freed, he added.

His wife, lawyer S Pushpaneela, also urged Abdullah to step in and release the men.

"Only the prime minister has the power to release him. He should let him (Manoharan) and the others go now to gain more confidence from the people. It looks like people have completely lost their trust in him," she said.

Pushpaneela said with Manoharan in detention, she has to undertake most of his duties as state assemblyman in the Kota Alam Shah constituency in central Selangor state.

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