

ISA-held state rep: Let me be sworn in before sultan
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Kota Alam Shah state representative and ISA detainee M Manoharan today demanded to be freed so he can be sworn into office. MCPX

temple demolition court case 260307 m manoharan Lawyer Manoharan and four other Hindu rights activists have been held without trial under internal security laws since December after organising an unprecedented mass rally claiming discrimination against ethnic Indians.

In March 8 general election he contested for the state seat in Selangor representing the opposition DAP, soundly beating the incumbent in what was seen as a protest against the draconian legislation.

The ruling Barisan Nasional coalition suffered unprecedented setbacks in the elections, with voters angry over its handling of ethnic tensions as well as rising inflation and crime.

"I have written to his majesty the Sultan of Selangor asking for my immediate release so that I could better serve the constituents," Manoharan said in a statement from the Kamunting detention centre.

However, attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail told the country's highest court last week that the five activists, who are under a two-year detention order, should not be released as they are a threat to national security.

Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar has said that Manoharan could be sworn in before the state legislature's speaker at Kamunting, as has been done twice in the past when detainees won office.

Minister warns Hindraf

kota alam shah state seat election 2008 results 010408 new But Manoharan said the government's refusal to release him before the swearing-in ceremony for the Selangor state government, scheduled for April 22, undermined democracy and was disrespectful to the state's royal ruler.

"I therefore demand and insist that, as a lawfully elected state assemblyman, I be taken to the state legislative assembly for the purpose of swearing-in. There should be no compromise," he said.

"The purpose of taking oath is an important aspect and element of our... democratic process."

Syed Hamid today also cautioned the Hindraf activist group, of which Manoharan is a leading member, against organising any more rallies.

"Please do not threaten the welfare of the country. The government will then have no choice but to act protect the country," he said according to the state Bernama news agency.

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