

Diplomats getting SB hassle for meeting Pakatan leaders
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By Jahabar Sadiq,

KUALA LUMPUR, July 1 — Malaysian intelligence agents are said to be hassling diplomats here for meeting Pakatan Rakyat (PR) officials and observing political events over the past few years since Election 2008, in what is seen as a move to lessen recognition for the federal opposition.

Diplomats told *The Malaysian Insider* that officers from the police's Special Branch (SB) have begun asking more questions about their meetings with PR leaders and making it clear such contacts are unwelcome.

"Such meetings are normal especially since PR runs more states since the 2008 polls. But some of the SB guys hint the meetings should not happen," a Western diplomat told *The Malaysian Insider*.

The diplomat, who didn't want to be named, said informal chats in the diplomatic circles show that Asian diplomats are asked more questions about such meetings.

"Asian diplomats are the focus though, more than what we get from the SB," he added, noting that Singaporean diplomats get it worst.

Wisma Putra recently chided three envoys from the republic over unsubstantiated accusations from pro-Umno bloggers that they actively participated in the chaotic April 28 Bersih rally.

Singapore has officially responded to the accusations of its envoys' involvement by pointing out that the three had only been on the streets of Kuala Lumpur to observe the rally, along with diplomats from many other countries.

"It must be the neighbours thing. But you know, all diplomats have to meet people from all political hues to know what's going on. And any protest or rally too," the diplomat said.

An Asian envoy pointed out that Malaysian diplomats are also seen observing events and meeting politicians from all sides of the divide in other countries.

"I don't see what the fuss is with some bloggers unless they are looking for scapegoats or a political diversion," he said.

But a Malaysian diplomat letter was published in Singapore's *Straits Times* yesterday to give the country's side of the debate with Singaporeans who criticised action against their envoys action.

"There is also a need to appreciate the minor but nevertheless significant differences attached to the issues of diplomats attending a legitimate rally and an illegal one," Nik Ady Arman, a political counsellor at the Malaysian High Commission in Singapore, wrote in the open letter.

He said the involvement of foreign citizens in a rally deemed "illegal" would generate speculation on their motive and put the burden of ensuring their safety on the host government.

The *Straits Times* had published on Thursday three letters by three men who castigated Putrajaya for "picking on" Singapore when its diplomats were caught up in the street rally that saw an outbreak of violence in Malaysia's capital city when demonstrators clashed with authorities.

On June 22, Singapore High Commissioner Ong Keng Yong was summoned to Wisma Putra over the alleged involvement of three diplomats from the commission in the Bersih 3.0 gathering.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said he had called Ong to his office to convey Putrajaya's displeasure.

The Najib administration has come under criticism globally in the aftermath of violent street demonstrations here over Bersih's push to clean up the electoral roll ahead of the 13th general election.

Malaysia's three main opposition parties — DAP, PAS and PKR — won an unprecedented five states and 83 seats out of a total 222 in Parliament in Election 2008, denying the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition their traditional two-thirds control in the lawmaking body for the first time since Independence in 1957.

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