

**'Hang Ambiga' call not BN stand, says sec-gen
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 27 — The Barisan Nasional (BN) today played down an Umno lawmaker's call for Bersih chief Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan to be hanged for treason, saying it was not the ruling coalition's stand in what seems to be a bid to arrest its sliding popularity ahead of key national polls.

"What was mentioned by the Sri Gading MP, Datuk Mohamad Aziz, in the Parliamentary session yesterday (June 26, 2012) suggesting that the organiser of the Bersih Assembly, Datuk S. Ambiga, be hanged to death by linking her to the Al-Ma'unah militants for attempting to create disorder and overthrow the government of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is personal and not BN's stand.

"I would like to stress that Barisan Nasional upholds the Malaysian Constitution and the rule of law and the Bersih Assembly case is still being investigated by the authorities," BN secretary-general Tengku Datuk Seri Adnan Tengku Mansor said.

The two-paragraph media statement came just hours after the MIC president, Datuk G. Palanivel, called on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and BN leaders to put a stop to the relentless attacks against the electoral reform chief.

"It is not right for a member of parliament to say that Datuk Ambiga should be hanged.

"In fact, no member of parliament should make this kind of a remark," Palanivel said in statement sent by his aide via text message.

Palanivel also questioned why Ambiga has been made a "scapegoat" and appeared to be the only target of criticism over the Bersih rally for free and fair elections.

"Why didn't these people demonstrate or put up burger stalls in front (the houses) of other Bersih leaders?" he asked, referring to a recent protest by anti-Bersih proponents outside Ambiga's house.

"The prime minister and other BN leaders should put a stop to this matter. Such remarks will affect Indian voters who are turning towards BN now," he added.

Mohamad had last night called for Ambiga to be hanged for the "treasonous" act of organising the April 28 Bersih rally, which the ruling BN has claimed was an attempt to topple the Najib administration.

The Sri Gading MP had compared the Bersih chief to a militant Muslim group that had tried to overthrow the government in 2000 and were eventually sentenced to death by hanging for "waging war against the King," the first people to be convicted of the offence.

"Shouldn't we also hang Ambiga for treason towards the Agong? Traitors should be punished as harshly as possible," Mohamad told Parliament when debating the supplementary supply bill last night.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers had accused the Umno MP of abusing his parliamentary immunity and demanded action be taken against him for stirring racial hatred.

The opposition lawmakers pointed out that parliamentary immunity is still limited to provisions in the Federal Constitution, adding that the Sri Gading MP could still be investigated by police for his remarks.

At a press conference here, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said he would direct all elected representatives from the party to lodge simultaneous reports against Mohamad for the latter's "samseng-like", "seditious", "racist", "repulsive", "repugnant" and "derogatory" remarks against Ambiga, who is the co-chair of election watchdog Bersih.

"Clearly these remarks are inflammatory, designed to stir disaffection, extremism and racism... it was directed against her because she's a woman, Hindu and Indian," the Bagan MP said.

"This is the first time in history that a lawmaker is demanding for the murder of someone," he added.

Lim noted that although Article 63 of the Federal Constitution grants immunity to a parliamentarian when addressing the august House, there are several exceptions, particularly when the remark uttered has racial undertones or is an attack on the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Ambiga personally appeared tickled by Mohamad's remark instead of being incensed.

"'Off with her head!' Sounds like Alice in Wonderland! The statement, of course, reflects more on the maker than on me," Ambiga said in response to Mohamad's remark.

The prominent lawyer-activist was able to maintain her composure and even pressed the Umno MP if Bersih's eight demands for electoral reform would be implemented before the 13th general elections, which must be called by next year.

Together with national laureate Datuk A. Samad Said, Ambiga led a massive public rally for the voter roll to be cleaned of dubious entries, for which she has been repeatedly branded a "traitor" by right-wing elements within the pro-BN establishment.

They have also demanded that she is stripped of her citizenship.

"The offer by civil society to help with the cleaning up of the electoral roll still stands, and as he is an elected MP, I believe the public would be more interested in his response to these critical questions," Ambiga said.

She added, "As for treason, asking for free and fair elections is not treason. Giving away citizenship for votes is."

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