

Umno MP withdraws 'hang Ambiga' remark
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 28 — Umno MP Datuk Mohamad Aziz today withdrew his remarks asking if Datuk Ambiga Sreenivasan should be hanged for treason after he was ordered to do so by Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker Datuk Dr Wan Junaidi Jaafar.

"Yang dipertua, yang dipertua, yang dipertua. I am a disciplined citizen. My party is disciplined," Mohamad (picture) said, sounding emotional and out of breath.

"[But] if my remarks hurt my friends, the Indians, MIC, PPP, and affect the spirit of understanding in Barisan Nasional (BN), I withdraw what I said on June 26."

But before agreeing to retract his words, the Sri Gading MP first launched into a biting attack against the DAP, calling the party "racist" and accusing DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng of spinning his words out of context.

"In this case about Ambiga, DAP clearly turned it into a racial issue because they are racists.

"I never intended to be racist. I never mentioned Indian or Hindu but DAP did... for the purpose of political gain.

"They are experts at spinning things, they want to destroy my relationship with others," the angry parliamentarian shouted.

Mohamad also continued to stand by his explanation that his remarks about Ambiga were meant to be a question, and not a statement as alleged by Lim.

Lim had earlier cited Standing Order 36(4), 36(7) and 36(10) against Mohamad, saying the lawmaker had used offensive language in the House.

"They do not understand Bahasa Malaysia. It was a question," the Umno MP retorted.

According to Hansard, the Umno leader had on Tuesday night said in the House: "Kita masih ingat apabila al-Maunnah menderhaka kepada Yang di-Pertuan Agong, kita hukum gantung dia. Ingat cerita itu beberapa tahun yang lalu?"

"Apakah Ambiga tidak boleh kita anggap penderhaka kepada Duli Yang Maha Mulia Yang di-Pertuan Agong dan hukum gantung pada dia?"

(Translation: We still remember when al-Ma'unah committed treason against the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, we hanged them. Remember that incident several years ago?

Can we not consider Ambiga a traitor to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and sentence her to hang?)

At the time, Mohamad was speaking in reference to the April 28 rally for free and fair elections organised by Bersih 2.0, the coalition of non-governmental organisations that Ambiga co-chairs with Malay literary icon Datuk A. Samad Said.

Wan Junaidi, when directing Mohamad to retract his words, had at first agreed that the remarks had been more a question than a statement.

"Sri Gading had asked - can or not (hang Ambiga). Al-Ma-unah members were hanged so he is asking that in Ambiga's case, can this be done. He was merely asking," he said.

However, Wan Junaidi noted that he disagreed with "extreme" statements, saying all parliamentarians should behave in moderation.

"So because of that, I request that Sri Gading... please stand... I request that you retract (your statement)," he said.

Speaking to reporters outside the House later, Lim maintained that Mohamad's words were a threat to Ambiga.

"You cannot run away from blame by saying this is just a question and not a statement," he said.

Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad agreed, saying the fact that Mohamad had mentioned the word "hang" indicated that the latter was not merely making a statement but had already passed judgement on Ambiga.

"He was already the judge and the jury and wants the execution to be carried out. It would be different if he asked why she was not charged," he said.

The Al-Ma'unah group had stolen weapons from an army camp in July 2000 in their attempt to overthrow the government before finally being cornered and forced to surrender in Sauk, Perak.

Mohamed Amin Mohamed Razali, who led the band of 29 men, was eventually hanged six years later, followed by three other leaders of the terrorist group. They were the first to be convicted for "waging war against the King".

The April 28 rally that saw tens of thousands gather at six different locations before heading to Dataran Merdeka was peaceful until about 2.30pm when Ambiga asked the crowd to disperse.

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