

Punish all, not just pro-democracy activists, PKR demands
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 7 — PKR today demanded equal punishment on all those who have stomped on photographs of political leaders and activists regardless of their political leanings, accusing the authorities of using selective prosecution to quell dissent against the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN).

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail pointed out that similarly unruly acts committed in the past by Umno or pro-BN activists against Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders like Lim Guan Eng had not resulted in any probe by the police.

But she noted that several youths found guilty of stomping on or mooning over pictures of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, his wife and Election Commission (EC) chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof during last week's pro-democracy gathering are currently facing the full extent of the law for their actions.

"It is selective prosecution. If you want to take action, take action against all those who have committed similarly offensive acts... take equal action against all.

"If the act was committed against Lim Guan Eng, take action, if against the PM, take action, if against (PAS spiritual adviser Datuk) Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, take action... then it is fair," she told reporters at the launch of PKR's "Merdeka Rakyat" mobile stage here.

A 19-year-old student, who was caught on camera exposing his bottom and stomping on the photographs of Najib and his wife, has reportedly been expelled from college — the Cheras-based Cybernetics International College of Technology — for insulting a national leader.

The police had earlier arrested the boy, as well as a number of other teenagers, for stomping on the photographs, in what opposition politicians have described as an over-reaction to the exuberance of young activists.

It is unclear what charges the boy faces, but the police have arrested him under the Sedition Act, which Najib had announced earlier this year would be repealed.

"This goes to show that they just want to use any instrument to prosecute people whom they think are against them.

"But when it comes to the opposition, it is like — never mind, there is no need to prosecute," Dr Wan Azizah said.

Sedition is not clearly defined and this was one of the reasons for the planned repeal as its use has sparked complaints of abuse by the authorities.

Similar offensive acts committed by pro-BN activists have gone unpunished in the past, including the performance of butt exercises by a group of army veterans at the home of Bersih 2.0 co-chairman Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan.

Earlier yesterday, another teenager apologised for stepping on the prime minister's picture at Dataran Merdeka during the countdown of the country's 55th National Day last week.

Ong Sing Yee, 19, surrendered to the police in Johor on Wednesday to help with investigations into the incident.

The police were reported to have set up three task forces to investigate three separate incidents of hooliganism that took place over the National Day weekend.

A firestorm erupted last week after several individuals were recorded tearing up posters bearing images of the prime minister, his wife and Election Commission chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof at the same event.

Several other people were spotted waving a flag with an alternative design — now identified as the Sang Saka Malaya — instead of the Jalur Gemilang at the National Day bash last Thursday night.

Bukit Aman's CID director Datuk Seri Mohd Bakri Zinin told The Malaysian Insider that the police were probing the two separate incidents under the Sedition Act — despite Putrajaya's decision to repeal the controversial law that has been widely panned as a tool to curb political dissent.

Mohd Bakri said the police were probing the flag incident as an attempt to incite hatred with intent to create public disorder under Section 4 (1)(a) of the Sedition Act 1948.

He added that stepping on pictures of Najib and wife were considered offences under Sections 290 and 504 of the Penal Code for being public nuisances and intentionally causing insult with an intent to provoke break the public peace, respectively.

Those convicted under Section 290 may be fined up to RM400 while those found guilty under Section 504 are liable to be jailed up to two years or fined, or both.

However, Section 4 (1)(a) of the Sedition Act prescribes a mandatory jail term of three years or a fine of up to RM5,000 for first offenders, which is subsequently raised to five years' jail for repeat offences.

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