

**DAP to challenge Utusan's AirAsia boycott call in Parliament**  
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**BY CLARA CHOOI**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 26 — The DAP will take its protest against Utusan Malaysia to Parliament when it sits next month, deputy chairman M. Kulasegaran vowed today as he lashed out at the Umno-owned daily for going on a warpath against budget carrier AirAsia.

Labelling Utusan Malaysia Umno's "favourite pet poodle", the Ipoh Barat MP told AirAsia X's chief executive Azran Osman Rani not to apologise for criticising the paper's allegedly racist slant, expressing confidence that a majority of Malaysians would continue to support the carrier despite its boycott campaign.

"The paper and Umno can do whatever they want at the end of a long day the ordinary people will support AirAsia, just as the majority of Malaysian voters supported Pakatan Rakyat (PR), though it was Umno-BN that won a disputed election," he said in a statement here.

The call to boycott AirAsia was mooted by Utusan's Awang Selamat — the nom-de-plume for the paper's collective editorial voice — in its column on May 19 in retaliation to criticism from Azran Osman over what the latter reportedly saw as racial instigation in the aftermath of the May 5 polls.

In response, the paper had published daily views from Perkasa leaders, the Muslim Consumers Society of Malaysia and pro-Umno activists who slammed Azran, branding him "arrogant" and a Malay who had forgotten his roots.

Perkasa's acting president Datuk Abdul Rahman Bakar, who had rallied to the paper's defence, blasted Azran, saying the latter could not have climbed up to his present position without the "Malay power fought for by Utusan Malaysia".

"Azran had the courage to publicly chastise Utusan for what many members of the public view as the paper's racially inflammatory editorials," Kulasegaran (picture) said, as he continued to defend the AirAsia X chief executive.

He said that as the apparent mouthpiece of the country's ruling party, it would have been reasonable to expect the paper to be chastened by the detailed results of the just-concluded May 5 polls, which saw Barisan Nasional (BN) lose a large chunk of support from the urban middle to upper class voters.

"Fat hope," Kulasegaran said. "...the paper has become even more rabid in its reportage after the general election. This is reflected in its insolent demand that Azran apologise to it for his criticisms of its editorial stance."

The senior parliamentarian lashed out at the paper's boycott campaign, reminding it of AirAsia's success as a business built from scratch and as a symbol of national pride.

Without censuring Utusan Malaysia for its actions, he said it appeared as if Umno's top brass were condoning the paper's boycott call.

"I urge Azran not to apologise to Utusan," he said. "I will raise this issue when the 13th

Parliament opens its inaugural session which is scheduled to begin June 24.

"I urge Malaysians to stand by Azran and to give Air Asia our fullest support," he added.

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