

## **Sedition Act: Look For A New Formula Or Maintain The Old Law?**

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KUALA LUMPUR, July 9 (Bernama) -- The move to repeal the Sedition Act 1948 reflected the country's political maturity and the leadership's confidence on the prevailing unity in the society.

The move would contribute to social transformation and strengthen the inter-racial harmony, according to political analysts.

According to the deputy head of the Politics, Security and International Relations Cluster of the National Professor Council Prof Dr Jayum Jawan, the government has to look into new ways in addressing issues relating to national unity and security, instead of depending on the Sedition Act.

"We can no longer depend on the old tactics by intimidating the people and incarcerate those who differ in their opinion. Though use of force is an option, but it is certainly not the answer in fostering inter-racial harmony in the country.

"The inter-racial harmony can be fostered through education where it will help in creating a plural society that is tolerant, cooperative and appreciate better of one another," he said to Bernama.

On May 30, 2014, the government announced that the Sedition Act will be replaced by another law relating to national harmony. Three drafts of the National Harmony bill is ready.

The move to repeal the Sedition Act goes back to 2012 when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the often controversial act would be abolished to enhance the freedom of speech in the country.

### **NOT A DRACONIAN LAW**

As for Jayum, Malaysia now needs a leader who espouses a firm and inclusive leadership taking into consideration the sensitive issues transcending racial and religious boundaries that is breeding an unproductive social environment.

The government machinery has to be neutral in carrying out its role regardless of the political ideology, ethnicity or religion because if they were seen taking sides, then they would have lost their credibility.

However, he cautioned that the new legislation, the National Harmony Bill, has to be implemented with care if it is to bring the aspired change.

"The law is not dangerous but what is dangerous is the misuse of the law. It is also dangerous when the interpretation of the law is monopolised by a certain party and disputed by the other party," he said.

#### SINGLE SCHOOL MEDIUM

In bolstering the national unity, Jayum opined that single medium schools have to be established as soon as possible and the government has made too many compromises and have been dilly dallying on the matter.

All parties have to accept the fact that in establishing a harmonious society, there can only be a single medium school that creates a common aspiration for all Malaysians regardless of their ethnic, cultural, religious and language background.

"You cannot force people. The same goes to the loyalty of the people and relations between individuals that cannot be forced upon and instead can only be forged naturally.

"Thus, starting from the school system is the best and the most effective approach in instilling loyalty to the nation. This is a better approach than forcing someone to do something that goes against his/her will and psyche," he said.

#### THE MINORITY

On individuals who create trouble in the country, Jayum pointed out the majority of Malaysians were rational in their thinking and only a few made a lots of noise to attract attention to their aimless cause.

"They appear vocal and mighty but the majority don't give a damn about them. This extreme minority group get their break when the media sensationalises their statements and activities.

"They serve as effective news content that can be sold and politicised. If the media is more responsible in playing their role, this small groups will vanish on their own," he said.

## THE RACIAL STABILITY

Speaking on the same subject, the Dean of the Law, Government and International Studies College at Universiti Utara Malaysia Associate Professor Dr Ahmad Martadha Mohamed opined that the Sedition Act served as a mechanism to keep in check those who attempt to destabilise the nation to meet their own gains.

"Of late there has been extreme demands especially relating to the rights of the Malays and the position of Islam as the country's official religion.

"If leaders only warn those who play with fire, it is of no effect as there is no specific laws to bring them to justice," said Ahmad Maradha, who believes the Sedition Act is still relevant and has to be preserved.

United States' Patriot Act as an example in preventing terrorism in the country but how is Malaysia going to prevent threats without Sedition Act, he asked.

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