

**Ibrahim and gang should also face sedition charges, says DAP lawmaker**  
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**BY LEE SHI-IAN**

If Putrajaya is not practising political persecution, why has it spared Datuk Ibrahim Ali, Datuk Zulkifli Noordin and Dr Ridhuan Tee Abdullah, a DAP lawmaker asked during a debate.

Bukit Gelugor MP Ramkarpal Singh said in recent weeks, opposition lawmakers, an academic and a journalist had either been charged with sedition or investigated under the Sedition Act 1948.

Ramkarpal raised this point while debating Umno Youth exco member Shahril Hamdan, who had claimed that even pro-Barisan Nasional figures had been charged with sedition.

"If pro-BN figures have been charged with sedition, how do you explain the lack of action taken against Ibrahim (president of right-wing group Perkasa)?"

"Or (Datuk) Zulkifli (Noordin), former Perkasa deputy president? Or former National Defence University Malaysia lecturer Ridhuan? Have they not made blatantly seditious comments?"

The debate, entitled: "Malaysia's youth: expectations and aspirations of the future", was organised by the King's College London Malaysia Alumni and held at a city hotel last night.

Shahril had enthused about the various reforms which Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's administration had executed in order to reach out to Malaysian youth.

"Najib has introduced PR1MA, with the intention of producing affordable homes for young Malaysians," he said, adding that colonial-era laws had also been abolished.

"The prime minister kept his word and did away with the Internal Security Act 1960 and the Emergency Ordinance 1969," Shahril said.

Umno Youth exco member Shahril Hamdan defends the Najib administration as one reaching out to youth. – The Malaysian Insider pic by Nazir Sufari, September 7, 2014.

Umno Youth exco member Shahril Hamdan defends the Najib administration as one reaching out to youth. – The Malaysian Insider pic by Nazir Sufari, September 7, 2014.

Ramkarpal said: "Draconian laws abolished? Let us get real, what has happened in the past month? Journalist being arrested for sedition, record number of people being

prosecuted.

"University Malaya law professor Azmi Sharom was charged with sedition, when it is clearly stated in the Federal Constitution that freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed.

"We are here to ask Putrajaya whether it is serious about repealing the Sedition Act, as it appears to be used more often now than ever in its entire history."

While admitting that Najib had provided a lot of incentives for youth, Ramkarpal said it would not cure the ills suffered by youth, who were fearful and scared to voice their own opinions.

"That is the great impediment for youth in Malaysia, the fear of persecution. It is quite unfortunate that Malaysian youth have not been given the opportunity to step up politically."

Ramkarpal said 40% of Pakatan Rakyat's 87 MPs were below the age of 40, compared with just five out of 135 for Barisan Nasional.

"That speaks a lot about political parties being willing to invest in youth and giving them an opportunity to serve the country," he said.

On the subject of brain drain, Ramkarpal said TalentCorp Malaysia had been given RM30 million by Putrajaya to attract Malaysians working abroad to return home.

"TalentCorp has been operating since 2011 but has only succeeded in luring 2,500 Malaysians to return to the country to work.

"It has been reported that there are close to one million Malaysians working and living abroad but only 2,500 have chosen to return.

"What does that say? Why are so many Malaysians reluctant to return? Is it the salaries, benefits or incentives?"

Ramkarpal said the main reason was the current political climate in Malaysia which had discouraged many Malaysian doctors, lawyers, engineers and scientists from returning.

Asked whether Pakatan Rakyat was ready to govern Malaysia should it defeat Barisan Nasional in the 14th general election, Ramkarpal said there was no doubt about it.

"The menteri besar crisis in Selangor and the water rationing earlier this year were isolated incidents, make no mistake, Pakatan Rakyat is ready."

Ramkarpal used the Penang government as an example of a well-run PR-government, , saying there was no reason it could not happen at a national level.

Lastly, Ramkarpal said Ibrahim did not understand the opposition's view about the Sedition Act, that it did not belong in this time or era.

"Ibrahim must understand that this is not a popularity contest, even Najib himself has admitted that the Sedition Act is outdated and should be repealed."

He was referring to Ibrahim's threat to withdraw his support for Umno and Barisan Nasional if Putrajaya repealed the Sedition Act.

"It is the right thing to do in principle, because at the end of the day, it is the principle that counts." – September 7, 2014.

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