

Freedom of expression must be upheld, EU tells Putrajaya
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International pressure is mounting on Putrajaya over Nurul Izzah Anwar's recent arrest, as the European Union today sounded a warning to Putrajaya that it was closely monitoring police investigations against the Lembah Pantai MP.

It also cautioned Malaysia to uphold freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary, after a spate of arrests against opposition politicians over the past two weeks.

"We have been following closely developments leading to the overnight detention and investigation of MP Nurul Izzah," said the European Union High Representative's spokesperson in a statement.

"Freedom of expression, as well as independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, are essential features of a democratic system and need to be upheld.

"Trust in the administration of justice is a key element of a democratic society," it added.

Nurul Izzah, who is PKR vice-president, was arrested on Monday over the #KitaLawan rally and her remarks about the judiciary.

She was released at noon yesterday, after having spent the night in prison.

Her arrest and detention made headlines around the world, and again drew international attention to Putrajaya's use of the controversial Sedition Act 1948.

Yesterday, the US State Department urged Putrajaya to apply the rule of law fairly.

"The Malaysian government's recent investigations and charges of sedition against critics raise serious concerns about freedom of expression, rule of law, and the independence of the judicial system in Malaysia.

"To further restrict freedom of expression will only lead to further erosion of important pillars of Malaysia's democratic system," the US State Department said in a statement.

A global jurists' group on Monday night condemned Putrajaya's continued use of the Sedition Act and called for Nurul Izzah's immediate release from prison.

Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch, said yesterday that Nurul Izzah's arrest showed Putrajaya knew no bounds in stifling free speech and criminalising dialogue considered normal in political discourse. – March 18, 2015.

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