

Umno leaders not arrested as investigation completed within 24 hours, says Ahmad Zahid

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It took less than 24 hours to wrap up investigations against two Umno leaders accused of uttering inflammatory remarks, so there was no need to arrest them, Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi told parliament today.

Ahmad Zahid said the two lawmakers – Datuk Dr Mashitah Ibrahim and Agriculture-and Agro-based Industries minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob – had their statements recorded in less than 24 hours.

"After 24 hours, the police have to refer them (those called up for statements) to the magistrate, but because Mashitah and Ismail Sabri had their statements recorded in less than 24 hours, there was no need to detain them," he said, replying to points raised during the debate on the royal address.

Zahid was answering a query from Ipoh Barat MP M.Kulasegaran, who asked the minister to explain why only opposition lawmakers and activists were subjected to arrests when they were called to give statements, but the Umno lawmakers were treated differently.

Ahmad Zahid said police had been fair in investigating complaints and it had also hauled up those who supported the government.

A total of 32 police reports were lodged against Ismail, the agriculture-and agro-based industries minister, over his call for Malays to boycott Chinese businesses as a way to force down the prices of goods.

Ten police reports were lodged against Mashitah, who had said that Chinese people had burned the Quran in a religious rite in Kuala Kedah, despite facts to the contrary.

A written parliamentary reply by the Home Ministry to DAP's Kulai MP Teo Nie Ching two weeks ago said that police had completed investigations into both cases, and had handed the investigation papers to the Attorney-General's Chambers for further action.

The Home Ministry said that in Mashitah's case, investigations were made under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code, which covers statements relating "to public mischief."

Following an uproar over Ismail's statement, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak cleared him of any ill-intent, saying that his remark was aimed at profiteering traders.

Ahmad Zahid also sought to defend the police force, claiming that it was still among "the best in the world", amidst accusations of selective arrests and detention,

targeted at opposition politicians and activists.

The Home minister said that despite the crime rate going down following several operations, the perception about the police remained stagnant as the people were "not open about the good job" it was doing.

"The police force is still the best now," he said.

At this point, PKR Indera Mahkota MP Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman sarcastically interjected: "the best like in our education la", referring to the education minister's contention that Malaysia's education system was one of the best in the world, despite falling university rankings and students' poor performance in global tests.

Fauzi's comment left the chamber in stitches, but Ahmad Zahid stood his ground and said that the negative image of the police was just a perception.

"As long as I am the minister, I will try my best to determine what is done by police is the most professional," he added, as BN lawmakers cheered. – March 24, 2015.

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