

Criticising Government Will No Longer Be An Offence Soon

Bernama

April 7, 2015

KUALA LUMPUR, April 7 (Bernama) -- The act of inciting hatred, contempt or causing dissatisfaction against the government will no longer be offences under the Sedition Act when an amendment to the act is approved.

The proposed amendments in the 2105 Sedition (Amendment) bill was tabled by Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi for first reading at the Dewan Rakyat here, today.

The amendment is in line with the aspiration of the government to be more open and enable the public to give feedback or criticism against the government towards setting up an administration which is transparent and responsible in Malaysia.

This bill is also aimed at deleting paragraph 3(1)(c) of the same act to make the act of sowing hatred or contempt or raising dissatisfaction towards the administration of justice in Malaysia no longer regarded as inciting, and as such, would no longer be dealt with as an offence under the act.

Nevertheless, to protect the sanctity of religions professed by the multi-religious communities in the country, the government proposed that any individual spreading bad feelings, hostility or hatred between any person or group by using religion, is regarded as having committed an offence under the act.

However, to avoid ambiguity, in relation to Islam, religion refers to the Hukum Syarak as codified under any written law and shall not include any deviant teachings.

The amendment of the act is also aimed at amending sub-section 3(3) of the parent act to widen the use of the provision to encompass the indirect publication of seditious materials.

In addition, the amendment also suggested a heavier punishment to be meted out on individuals who committed offences under the act, when it is gazetted.

The amendment to subsection 4(1) was included to increase jail from three years in the original act to a minimum three years and a maximum seven years, and do away with fine.

Meanwhile, the new 4(1A) subsection was included to provide an allocation for a minimum jail term of five years and maximum 20 years for offences under the act, based on the seriousness of the offences.

Also included is a new section, 5A, a provision against allowing a person who is charged with committing an offence under the act to be bailed, and Section 5B, to give the court power to order an individual who had been charged to surrender his travel documents.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2015 BERNAMA

Source : <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/newsindex.php?id=1124000>