

**Putrajaya using scare tactic to silence media, says Pakatan
The Malaysian Insider
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By Elizabeth Zachariah**

Condemning the arrest of three senior editors of The Malaysian Insider and two top executives for alleged sedition, Pakatan Rakyat lawmakers said today that it was a scare tactic meant to silence the media into "toeing the line".

PKR vice-president, Tian Chua, said that the arrests, seemingly to investigate the portal's report on Islamic criminal laws or hudud, was just an excuse used by Putrajaya to invoke fear among the media.

"The arrests are an assault to the entire press, and not just one media," he said in a press conference with a host of Pakatan lawmakers at the Parliament lobby today.

"We know the government has been trying to target certain media for practising free press.

"The hudud article is just an excuse. The purpose is to put fear in all journalists and media to toe the line and not to be critical of them."

Police today arrested The Edge publisher, Ho Kay Tat and The Malaysian Insider chief executive, Jahabar Sadiq, over a news article related to hudud that appeared in the portal on March 25.

Three others including TMI managing editor, Lionel Morais, Bahasa section editor, Amin Iskandar and features and analysis editor, Zulkifli Sulong, were detained last night over the same reason.

The three were arrested yesterday over the portal's report on March 25 that the Conference of Rulers had rejected a plan to amend a federal law that would allow hudud, or the Islamic penal code, to be enforced in Kelantan.

The Magistrate's Court today rejected an application by police to remand Morais, Amin and Zulkili, and the trio are expected to be released from the Dang Wangi police station at 7pm.

However, Jahabar and Ho are still being detained. Police have said they will apply for a remand order for both of them while their lawyer Syahredzan Johan said the duo would be spending the night in custody.

Today, Pakatan MPs including Tian Chua, Teresa Kok (DAP-Seputeh), Datuk Johari Abdul (PKR-Sungai Petani), Hanipa Maidin (PAS-Sepang) and others expressed their solidarity with TMI and their detained executives.

Kok said that the opposition coalition was "dissatisfied and angry" over the arrests of the five, adding that detention was not necessary to take their statements.

"It shows a very worrying trend. This is to create an atmosphere of fear among reporters and activists and it is not reasonable," the DAP vice-chairman said.

Johari said that despite the swift action against the news portal, police had failed to take similar action against those who were aligned with the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, including former minister Datuk Dr Mashitah Ibrahim.

"Mashitah, who lied openly, had no action taken against her. This trend is extraordinary," he said.

Ten police reports were lodged against Mashitah who said that Chinese people had burned the Quran in a religious rite in Kuala Kedah – an allegation that was proven to be false.

The Home Ministry had said that in Mashitah's case, investigations were made under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code, which covers statements "conducting to public mischief" and the case was referred to the Attorney-General.

Johari also warned Putrajaya that more people would come out to fight the government's oppressive actions if it continued to pressure the media, civil society and opposition politicians.

"The pressure cooker is on now. If they think by doing this, they are putting fear in us, they are wrong. The more they pressure us, the harder we will come back.

"This is as if the prime minister is out of control. This is something the government seriously has to consider," he said.

PAS's Hanipa said the arrests of the TMI executives showed that Malaysia was heading towards being a police state.

"We cannot speak up. We will surely 'kena'. More unfortunately, everything that the PM promised to us, the exact opposite is happening. More people are being arrested.

"If they shut the door of democracy, we will open up the one of demonstration," he added.

The arrests are part of investigations after a police report was lodged by an official from the Conference of Rulers last week. Another report was lodged against the portal by Kedah Umno Youth.

The report published on March 25 said the Conference of Rulers had rejected a proposal to amend a federal law that would pave the way for hudud to be enforced in Kelantan.

The article said that the proposal to amend the law was in a report by the joint Hudud Technical Committee, which comprised Kelantan state religious officials and those

from the federal government. The joint committee had prepared the report on the proposed amendments for the rulers to consider at their meeting on March 11, but it did not go through.

The Keeper of the Rulers' Seal lodged a police report on March 26 to deny that the Conference of Rulers had discussed the matter, saying it had never issued any statement on hudud in Kelantan. – March 31, 2015.

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