

# Malaysia: Dozens detained as cops block protests over BN takeover of state parliament

Monday 11 May 2009, by [BOYLE Peter](#) (Date first published: 9 May 2009).

May 8, 2009 — Action in Solidarity with Asia and the Pacific — Police detained dozens of opposition activists, lawyers and legislators on May 6-7 as protests erupted around Malaysia's ruling National Front's (Barisan Nasional — BN) removal of the opposition People's Alliance (Pakatan Rakyat) state government of Perak, one of five states won by the opposition in the March 2008 general elections. Among those arrested was Dr D. Jeyakumar, the federal MP of the Socialist Party of Malaysia (PSM).

Earlier this year, the BN induced three opposition state assembly members to turn "independent" and support the BN to take over the Perak state government. May 7 was the first day of sitting of the state assembly since the BN power grab. The opposition has called for new elections to the state assembly and opinion polls indicate that the opposition could win a bigger majority if new elections were called.

For the first time in Malaysia's history, police invaded a state assembly and dragged off opposition assembly members who were resisting the removal of the Pakatan Rakyat speaker of the assembly. The speaker, D. Sivakumar, was also dragged off.

PSM secretary-general S. Arutchelvan described the incident as the "unmasking" of new BN Prime Minister Najib Razak as a repressive ruler.

## PSM MP arrested

Jeyakumar was arrested along several others simply for turning up to show his support for the opposition at the Perak state assembly building in Ipoh, Arutchelvan explained. An electoral reform activist Wong Chin Huat was arrested and charged with sedition for calling on the public to wear black in protest. "People who went to show solidarity with Wong were harassed and arrested in front of the Brickfield Police Station", Arutchelvan reported.

"Islamic Party (PAS) vice-president Mohamad Sabu was locked up because he was going to lead mass prayers over the Perak state assembly sitting. Three students who tried to deliver a cake on the 31<sup>st</sup> birthday of Altantuya, a Mongolian model alleged to have been murdered on Najib's orders, were also arrested." Police chief Musa Hassan even warned the public not to wear black on May 7. The police also obtained a court injunction which allows them to arrest on sight any member of the public seen within the vicinity of Perak state government building. Riot police surrounded the building and set up road blocks in the area and Jeyakumar and 68 other opposition supporters were arrested for breaching this order", said Arutchelvan.

Later that night, police arrested dozens of people who held candlelight vigils in several cities.

## BN has 'no faith in people'

Arutchelvan continued: "Those who have seen Najib in action in 1987, with his infamous threat to 'soak the keris [traditional Malay sword] in Chinese blood', will remember what he is capable of doing. The BN manoeuvres to avoid a new state election in Perak and the BN's fear of by-elections are

clear signs that the BN will not try to seek any mandate from the people. When a government has no faith in the people, then they will have no choice but to use the machinery of the state — the police, army, the courts and the election commission – to serve its objectives.”BN’s power politics had always revolved around three factors: money politics and the support of the capitalist class, the use of state machinery to crush political enemies and the issue of race and religious issues to create disunity.

“Today we see that some of these elements are withering away. The unity within BN is crumbling every time the race card is used. It backfires. The capitalist class has no loyalty and will support any government which is pro-business and free-market orientated, as we can see in the case of the Pakatan-controlled state governments. That means Najib can only rely on the state machinery to hang on to power.

“The people surprised both the opposition and the ruling party in the last general elections. Today the people are faced by another kind of scenario when the ruling party is not interested in elections. We may not have the freedom to fight future battles through the ballot any more. It is therefore important to build multiethnic people’s power based on equality, human rights and fairness to fight the oppression and the undemocratic onslaught facing all of us.”It is only by building a truly multiethnic people’s power from below, from the grassroots, that can we challenge the more than 50 years of tyranny by the ruling elites. The biggest challenge for Pakatan is not only the BN but its own challenge to overcome racial and religious politics and serve the people irrespective of race and religion, fairly and equally.

“Today we see a power struggle in the state of Perak. The might of the people is in its numbers. PSM stands together with the people for real reforms.”

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