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Police warn demonstrators who carry volatile items

M. Jeffri Razali

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Police will come down hard on anyone caught in possession of petrol or kerosene during an illegal gathering scheduled in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman on Saturday.

This follows the distribution of mini-pamphlets to motorists and passers-by in the city, urging the public to turn up for the planned gathering at 3.30pm, and bring along petrol or kerosene and small towels.

The pamphlets which labelled the scheduled gathering as Perhimpunan Sejuta Rakyat (Gathering of A Million Citizens), also advised the participants to be careful as the police would take stern action against them.

Commenting on the pamphlets, city police chief Datuk Kamaruddin Ali said this evening police were viewing the matter seriously as this was the first time the public had been told to bring along volatile materials to an illegal gathering.

In view of this, he said he had instructed his men to be on the lookout and conduct checks on anyone who turned up for the gathering.

"We will take the most severe action against those found to be in possession of kerosene or petrol at any gathering.

"Apart from the usual action against illegal gathering, they will also be facing charges for carrying offensive weapons," he said in a telephone interview.

Due to the seriousness of the matter, Kamaruddin said police were fully prepared to deal with any eventuality.

"We will take the necessary action to ensure that things do not get out of hand. There is no compromise when it comes to the security of the public and nation."

Kamaruddin also warned that police would not hesitate to take action against demonstrators, even if they brought children along to any illegal gathering.

"I have warned the public on countless occasions not to bring children along at illegal assemblies. This time around, we will not tolerate this nonsense."

It is learnt that most of the demonstrators had brought along children as an "insurance" against any police attempt to break up illegal gatherings.

On rumours that a large crowd would gather at the National Mosque after Friday prayers tomorrow before marching to the Parliament building, Kamaruddin said those who had received leaflets on the matter should disregard them.

He said police were aware of the matter and adequate precaution would be taken to ensure nothing untoward happened.

A group is scheduled to stage an illegal gathering near Parliament building tomorrow where the 1999 Budget would be tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

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