

Ceramah ban: Cops 'overrule' Johari
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Beh Lih Yi

After halting at least six ceramah held by the opposition in the past two days, the police today allowed for such political talks to continue, but with a condition.

With immediate effect, all parties have been asked to submit a list of their ceramah for the day to the police by 12pm.

"All the contesting parties have agreed to follow whatever rules and regulations in the election campaign so something undesirable will not happen," Deputy Internal Security Minister Mohd Johari Baharum told reporters in Ijok this evening.

He said that the advance notice to the police was necessary to allow them to make preparations for traffic control and on security matters.

The minister was met by the reporters outside the Batang Berjuntai police station after holding a meeting which lasted about an hour with the opposition leaders including Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang and Parti Keadilan Rakyat president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Selangor chief police officer Ismail Omar and Kuala Selangor district police chief Ibrahim Chin were also present during the meeting.

However, merely an hour after the opposition was given that assurance, the police stopped an opposition ceramah in Batang Berjuntai for not having a permit.

This was despite that PKR had earlier sent them a list of their upcoming ceramah.

A large police presence - at least four police trucks and five Federal Reserve Units - was seen at the ceramah venue before the organisers were told to stop their function.

Over the past two days, the police, aided by the FRU, stopped at least six opposition ceramah on the grounds that they were 'illegal gathering'.

Ensure incident-free election

Earlier in his press conference, Johari also refused to elaborate on the police action in stopping the opposition's ceramah.

"That one (the ceramah issue) is over, we (open a) new chapter now," he said.

He then went on to claim that the opposition was also at fault for applying for permits on a short notice which resulted in the police in rejecting the applications.

"We can't have ceramah if there is traffic or security problem. The police have to look at these aspects before issuing the permit. That's why there is problem in the past two nights."

Asked on the normal procedure for the issuance of permits during an election campaign, Johari said: "There is no real guideline. It would be two weeks (according to the Police Act) but because this is an election, so we tolerate it (the time frame) but we can't tolerate the issue of security."

Lim, meanwhile, said the police, apart from looking into the security aspect, should also ensure that the election campaign proceed without any trouble.

"They have to ensure this is an incident-free election so the people in Ijok can decide who will be their next state representative," he told reporters at the same venue.

Johari's Ijok visit this evening was prompted by Lim, who brought up the issue in Parliament earlier today.

Police protection

Meanwhile, PKR information chief Tian Chua said that the party has requested for police protection during their campaign.

"Our campaign has been regularly attacked and threatened at certain areas like Sungai Darah and Tuan Mee.

"It is not right for certain party to declare that is their area and others could not go in to campaign," Chua told reporters.

"Therefore, we have requested for the police protection, but they said they will consider the matter," he added.

In the latest incident, PKR candidate Khalid Ibrahim this afternoon escaped unhurt but another party member was beaten up when they were assaulted while on their campaign rounds.

Khalid, 61, is facing a straight fight with BN's MIC candidate, K Parthiban, 38, in the Ijok by-election, where polling has been fixed for this Saturday.

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