

Pakatan wants in on Bersih audience with Agong
Malaysiakini.com
July 4, 2011

Pakatan Rakyat's top leadership will hold an emergency meeting on Wednesday to discuss plans to seek an audience with the Agong over the upcoming Bersih 2.0 rally.

PKR deputy president Azmin Ali (left) said party advisor Anwar Ibrahim had contacted his DAP counterpart Lim Kit Siang and PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang last night right after Istana Negara released a statement yesterday.

"... they agreed to call an emergency meeting on Wednesday," Azmin told a press conference at the PKR headquarters today.

Azmin said they have yet to determine the grounds for seeking an audience, though he hinted that it would most likely revolve around the goals of Bersih 2.0 and its guarantee of a peaceful demonstration.

He stressed that it is important for both the Bersih 2.0 committee and Pakatan to meet with the Agong, to explain that the demands for electoral reform will not in any way cause chaos.

"We (Pakatan) will discuss this thoroughly during the meeting, and hopefully we can arrange for an audience before (Saturday) when the rally is scheduled to take place," said Azmin.

"We also want to present to the Agong all the evidence and proof that we have of fraud and flaws in our electoral system."

On the offer by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to allow the rally to proceed if it is held in a stadium, Azmin said it is not the government's place to make such demands.

He said it does not matter whether it is held indoors or otherwise, as the rally organisers have given their explicit guarantee that it will be a peaceful event.

"We have given our guarantee (of a peaceful gathering) to the authorities and the police, and (freedom of assembly) is also guaranteed by the constitution.

"There is no reason for Najib to dictate what activity we can engage in," he said.

Azmin added that the onus is now on Najib and Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein to heed the royal decree and set right the chaos that has ensued over the past few weeks due to the Bersih 2.0 crackdown.

"We will see over the next few days, whether Umno or Najib and Hishammuddin (left) will take the Agong's advice or not.

"It is incumbent on Najib to carry out the reforms demanded (by Bersih), and we also urge Hishammuddin to release all the detainees roped in during the crackdown."

The Bersih 2.0 committee said it intends to seek an audience with the Agong and will act on royal advice in deciding whether or not to proceed with the rally in Kuala Lumpur.

In a statement earlier, PAS had said it hopes to join the Bersih 2.0 delegation to the palace.

Party president Abdul Hadi Awang said PAS wants to clarify any "confusion" that has arisen from the "negative coverage" against Bersih 2.0's intended peaceful rally.

"As a result of this confusion, it has caused provocation by certain groups, giving the impression that the situation is now out of control to the point where the nation's laws are no longer respected by the

authorities," he said.

Abdul Hadi also urged the federal government to properly study protests against the current electoral system in an "open and sincere" manner, in line with the Agong's wish to see the government "perform its entrusted duties fairly and wisely".

He added that there are weaknesses in the electoral system which have allowed cheating, corruption, abuse of power and lopsided media coverage, and which do not bode well for democracy.

Complaints for Agong

At a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, his deputy Mohamad Sabu said that, if PAS is part of the Bersih 2.0 delegation, the party would inform the Agong about how the law is being abused by the authorities.

"We will complain about the non-compliance with the law by the police in trying to thwart the rally by making arbitrary arrests," he said.

He said PAS will abide by any decision by the Bersih 2.0 steering committee with regard to the rally.

Party vice-president Mahfuz Omar said the police must cease their string of arbitrary arrests because the Agong has called for negotiations.

"Bersih is ready to negotiate but the police are closing the door for negotiations," he said at the same press conference.

Since June 25, more than 100 individuals, including several MPs and state assemblypersons, have been arrested in connection with the Bersih rally.

Mahfuz also claimed that the Agong's statement indicates tacit endorsement for Bersih 2.0 because "nothing negative was said about Bersih 2.0".

"In fact, His Majesty urged the government to act fairly. This is a recognition for Bersih 2.0."