

Gerakan leaders can't see eye to eye on Bersih
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A Gerakan leader has expressed suspicion of Bersih 2.0 organisers for their insistence in wanting to hold their massive rally at Stadium Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur today.

The party's Kedah chief Dr Cheah Soon Hai said it was unnecessary for the event to be held in the city centre as it could be done in other states, especially those governed by Pakatan Rakyat.

"What sort of political agenda does the Bersih coalition have for being so persistent in wanting to hold its rally in Stadium Merdeka?" asked Cheah, in a press statement today.

"This persistence of the Bersih coalition has triggered the curiosity of many," he said.

Bersih organisers had agreed to shift the rally from the streets to Stadium Merdeka following a recent audience with the Agong. Prime Minister Najib Razak had agreed to the proposal, only to backtrack later.

Yesterday, the police denied permits for the organisers to hold the rally in the stadium of their choice, forcing the rally back to the streets.

Cheah suggested that the election watchdog postpone the date of the event so that it has more time to apply for a permit and run the gathering smoothly.

'Let out the steam'

However, his colleague in Gerakan Penang, human rights and legal bureau chief Baljit Singh urged the authorities to allow permits for all groups who want to rally – from the BN or Bersih.

Umno Youth still plans to rally tomorrow against Bersih, while Perkasa cancelled their counter-rally to instead "loiter" around the area.

"Let the steam come out of the pressure cooker for all those who want to express themselves tomorrow or else they are just going to explode," he told Malaysiakini.

Baljit, who will be at the rally to monitor the situation with a group of lawyers, said the entire episode has turned into a circus, with "national level clowns" trying to hijack citizens' right to assembly.

He laid blame on both sides of the political divide for trying to impose its own agenda in the NGO-driven movement whose message for electoral reforms is loud and clear.

After the crackdown by police in the past two weeks, Baljit said the image of the ruling BN coalition would suffer, urging leaders to wake up to the reality on the ground.

"If the situation turns bad at the rally, people are going to see it as coming from the government whether it was their fault or not. This is the battle of perception that we are currently facing," he said.