

Suhakam defends marchers, says PAA flawed
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Suhakam Commissioner Mohd Sha'ani Abdullah contested a complaint by the police that organisers had violated the law by allowing marching, and the bringing of children to the Himpunan Hijau 2.0 rally at Kuantan today.

Responding to Kuantan OCPD Mohd Jasmani Yusof's stand, Mohd Sha'ani (left), who was there as an observer, said these were unreasonable restrictions to begin with.

"On the marching, do you expect the participants to jump from the sky? They are staying at certain hotels, so when they come out, they are not going to come out one by one from 5am in the morning and come individually.

"Is it a crime to march? And that's the weakness of Peaceful Assembly Act, it does not actually address the right of the people to move or participate in a peaceful assembly," he said.

He added that under international standards, the right of children to assemble is also guaranteed and to ban it violates human rights.

However he also had praise for the police's performance at the rally at but stressed that they could do better.

"Their actions today are commendable, but there's more that can be done," he said when met after the rally today, adding that the Peaceful Assembly Act has several restrictions within it.

"We have to review and improve it to respect the democratic rights of the people. The law is not above the people, it is to ensure their rights," he said.

Meanwhile, DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang (above) at a luncheon after the rally said the government and police should have more confidence in the people.

"The various restrictions are uncalled for, there should be a total revamp to allow expression of their views," he said.

The rally today was the first major test of the Peaceful Assembly Act which was passed despite severe criticism against it.

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