

Suaram takes 'ignorant' Penang CPO to task
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Susan Loone

Suaram's Penang chapter, which had organised Sunday's anti-Lynas rally, has condemned the police for shirking their responsibility to protect citizens from violence.

Coordinator Lee Hui Fei (left) said the pro-Lynas group which disrupted the rally had acted in a "thuggish" manner, leaving two journalists hurt in the fracas.

Lee urged the police to initiate an immediate probe into the actions of the group, which comprised several members of Umno and Malay-rights group Perkasa.

Suaram has given the police seven days to act or it will act against their "reckless and irresponsible" handling of the violent disruption of a peaceful gathering.

She noted that state police chief Ayub Yaacob had said the organisers were "arrogant" and had only informed the police at the eleventh hour about the gathering.

"This is a cheap excuse for not responding to the rakyat's call for help in moments of distress," she said in a statement.

"Would that mean that the police standard operating procedure dictates that they shall not take any action even if they are witnessing a murder right under their nose, just because the victim did not write in beforehand to inform the police that he would be murdered?"

Lee said Ayub (right) cannot claim ignorance as special branch personnel had, as usual, been monitoring the gathering at the Speakers' Square.

The rally in support of the Himpunan Hijau 2.0 assembly in Kuantan, Pahang, pitched about 500 members of the anti-Lynas group, against 50 supporters of the rare earth plant under construction in Gebeng, Kuantan.

At a press conference yesterday, Penang executive councillor Lydia Ong said she was at the rally and had informed Ayub when a "hostile group" began heckling the anti-Lynas protestors about 6pm.

In a text-message, Ayub had told her that he had sent a team to monitor the situation..

Ong said her car, a Mercedes Benz, was slightly damaged by the group which had allegedly told her that "state excos have money, go and repair your car".

At the same press conference held at the office of Kwong Wah Jit Poh, PAS commissioner Salleh Man (left) said he was ashamed that such behaviour is prevalent among Umno Youth members.

"This is not Malay culture. (Lim) Guan Eng is the head of state, we have accepted it, give him some respect," said the Permatang Pasir assemblyperson.

Salleh said it was alleged that several PAS members had also joined the hostile group.

"We will investigate this and, if it is found to be true, we will take immediate action against those involved. But as far as I know, no PAS member joined the group," he added.

'Acts of intimidation'

Penang executive councillor Chow Kon Yeow claimed yesterday that the incident was not an isolated one, referring to attacks on PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim's ceramah in Johor, the recent visit of student activist Adam Adli and the Anti-ISA Vigil in 2010.

"This confirms that there are similar people behind these acts of intimidation and violence. Does Umno sponsor violence and barbaric behavior?" he asked

Chow (left), the Tanjung MP, acknowledged that freedom of speech extends to Umno as well, but said its members had crossed the line of civility by resorting to "bully tactics, violence, and intimidation".

This goes to prove that Umno is "incapable" of civil debate, he said.

"When the ruling party can only resort to shouting curse words and beating up journalists at a peaceful rally, what hope is there in their leader's promise of transformation?"

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