

DBKL says no to Bersih rally at Dataran Merdeka
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By Aidila Razak

Kuala Lumpur City Council (DBKL) has rejected Bersih's plans to hold their sit-in on April 28 at Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur.

NONE According to the coalition for clean and fair elections Bersih steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah (right), they received a letter from DBKL around 11 this morning. According to the letter that was read out during Bersih's press conference, DBKL said the event is not suitable to be held at the Dataran.

The council said the venue is to be used only for events of "national level" such as celebrations.

"We regret to inform that your application cannot be approved as the activity intended is unsuitable to be used in Dataran Merdeka as stipulated by the DBKL.

"Only national-level events are allowed at the Dataran, like the National Day celebration and Federal Territories Day," says the letter signed by DBKL deputy director of operations Normah Malik.

Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan said the coalition sent letters to DBKL and the police on Monday evening in relation to the rally.

However, DBKL denied receiving any application from the coalition on the planned sit-in.

The letter by Normah referred to Bersih's letter dated April 16.

Responding to the rejection, Ambiga said she was "not surprised" and that the sit-in would proceed as "Dataran Merdeka belongs to the rakyat".

"There are many events held there, and a company recently held its celebrations at the Dataran, too," she said, referring to the Nestle 100th anniversary celebrations held last month.

She added that the coalition would not appeal the decision, and that it would continue with preparations, including dealing with police who have asked the NGO to come in to fill in some forms.

"If there are any obstructions (by DBKL) on the day, we will negotiate with them," she said.

Home minister okayed sit-in

Yesterday Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said in a statement that the sit-in is not a "security threat, as it has little traction with the people".

Bersih, the coalition for clean and fair elections, is organising the event in the capital city following the failure of the Election Commission to implement its eight demands after the massive rally last July 9.

Supporters in at least 33 cities worldwide plan to organise solidarity sit-ins on the same day to call for clean and fair elections in Malaysia.

Joining the KL rally is anti-Lynas group Himpunan Hijau, which successfully held a rally attended by thousands in Kuantan earlier this year.

Meanwhile, the solidarity sit-in in Sabah is also facing some problems as police yesterday announced that

they will hold their practice exercise at the sit-in venue, Padang Merdeka, on April 28.

Sabah sit-in organiser Andrew Ambrose, who was also present at the press conference today, said Bersih hopes to share the field with the police.

“We hope we can have our sit-in and watch the police practice. It will be a good civil exercise for Sabahans who have been intimidated by the police,” Ambrose said.

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