

DBKL to Bersih: Prepare to face the music
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Bersih 3.0 supporters at Saturday's Dataran Merdeka sit-in will face the same actions taken against activists who occupied the venue recently, Kuala Lumpur mayor Ahmad Fuad Ismail has warned.

"Action has been taken against those kids at Dataran Merdeka... The same action will taken if you (Bersih supporters) do the same," Fuad said.

He said this when asked how Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) would react if the Bersih coalition proceeded with its plan to hold the sit-in at the square from 2pm to 4pm.

Fuad said this at a press conference after a one-hour meeting between DBKL and Bersih representatives failed to reach agreement on the venue for the rally.

'In case of chaos, blame Bersih'

Asked whether DBKL would seek police help to stop the rally from taking place at Dataran Merdeka, Fuad declined to answer.

"When the time comes, you will know. Don't worry... We are ready. We don't allow them to go to Dataran Merdeka... let us do our job," he said.

NONEWhen it was pointed out to him that a confrontation with the Bersih supporters could create chaos, Fuad said should this happen, it is the rally organisers who should be blamed.

"Who creates chaos? They create it because they want to go against the laws and (threaten) to sit on the road. I have given them alternatives but they didn't give me any alternative," he said.

He claimed that Bersih representatives had said during the meeting that rally participants might sit on the roads surrounding the square if Dataran Merdeka is cordoned off.

In recent days, DBKL has conducted several raids on students and activists who have set up a protest camp at Dataran Merdeka for more than a 10 days as part of a campaign for free tertiary education.

Their tents and belongings have been confiscated by DBKL while one out of six arrested have been charged in court.

Bersih: No time to change venue

Prior to Fuad's press conference, Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan told reporters the coalition still hoped that Fuad would change his mind before Saturday.

NONEThus, she said, Bersih would stick to its original plan to hold the rally at Dataran Merdeka, despite Fuad had offered them Stadium Merdeka, explaining that there was not enough time to change venue.

"If we change place now, it would cause bigger confusion. People will still gather here (Dataran Merdeka) as well as at Stadium Merdeka.

"It is just too little time to inform people," she said.

"We would be prepared to discuss with the mayor on crowd control and security issues if he changes his

mind... We are hoping that we can make it happen," Ambiga added.

DBKL: That's not our fault

Earlier, Fuad told reporters that Ambiga's argument about the time constraint was a weak excuse not to relocate the rally.

He said Bersih has only itself to blame because its official letter to DBKL was only handed on April 19. He said DBKL replied that very day.

"They claimed they had faxed in the letter on April 16 but we didn't receive it. If it is an important letter, why only fax and not hand deliver it to us?"

"Hence, the issue of DBKL delaying their request, causing them to have insufficient time to inform their supporters does not arise," he said.

He said Bersih's argument that DBKL was already informed through an announcement on April 4 of the coalition's plan to hold a rally there also cannot be accepted.

"That's your intention but it was not official notice... Let's say if I hold a kenduri (feast) but I don't give you any invitation, would you come?"

Fuad: I'm being fair

Fuad also stressed that if Bersih was willing to accept the alternative venue - Stadium Merdeka, which is just 1km away from Dataran Merdeka - he would be willing to hold a joint press conference with Bersih and help publicise the venue change.

"If all of you here report about it, I think the whole world will know."

NONEFuad further explained that he was in a dilemma because allowing Bersih to use the historic square would cause him to be accused of double standards, breaking the laws and failing to protect the lives of 1.8 million Kuala Lumpur folks from being disrupted.

Previously three organisations - Malay rights group Perkasa, anti-LGBT movement and a Malay traditional marital arts group - had made the same request but all had been rejected, he claimed.

As for the decisions to allow other cultural and sports activities to use the venue, Fuad explained that those events were neutral and nobody would feel uncomfortable with them, unlike Bersih which is opposed by certain quarters of the society.

Furthermore, Dataran Merdeka had been gazetted as a prohibited place for rallies under the new Peaceful Assembly Act 2011, he said.

"If they argue that Dataran Merdeka has historical value, same goes for Stadium Merdeka... Independence declaration was made by (first prime minister) Tunku Abdul Rahman there.

"It is more appropriate (to hold rally there) because it is wide and has many parkings," he elaborated.

