

Anifah briefs envoys and foreign press on Bersih 3.0

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By Koh Jun Lin

Ahead of the Bersih 3.0 protest tomorrow, Foreign Minister Anifah Aman has held a series of briefings to explain the government's side of the story to the international community.

The two invitation-only sessions, lasting about an hour each, started at about 4pm at Royale Chulan Hotel, Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysiakini was barred from entering both sessions, but had been made to understand that Anifah said in both briefings that the government has no wish to stop the Bersih 3.0 rally tomorrow, but its attempts to facilitate it had been futile.

The first briefing was addressed to about ten foreign correspondents, while about 100 members of Kuala Lumpur's diplomatic corps attended the second briefing that took place immediately after the first.

Earlier today, Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein held a similar briefing with some 30 newspaper editors at the police headquarters at Bukit Aman, Kuala Lumpur.

According to insiders approached after the briefings, Anifah said the police are better able to ensure the safety of the crowd and minimum public disruption if the rally was held in a stadium, but the alternative venues proposed had been turned down.

"They've asked for Stadium Merdeka before (for Bersih 2.0 last year) and now we have offered them Stadium Merdeka and they refuse," Anifah was quoted as saying by a source, who declined to be named.

The government had also previously offered Stadium Cheras, Stadium Titiwangsa, and Bukit Jalil National Stadium as alternatives, all located within Kuala Lumpur.

Responding to Bersih's claim that there was too little time for a venue change, Anifah reportedly said that he believes that it is still possible to find a "safe and lawful venue" if the organisers would work with the government.

He also supposedly said that the government is already addressing seven out of eight of Bersih's demands, such as to use indelible ink, and is working to sure fair media coverage for all political parties and candidates.

