

'Najib, don't whisper, apologise publicly'

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By Susan Loone

Prime Minister Najib Razak has been asked to apologise publicly instead of whispering in the ear of a journalist that he was sorry for the alleged police abuse on several reporters during the Bersih 3.0 sit-in on Saturday.

"Don't whisper. Apologise publicly to everyone who were harassed or abused by the police on that day. Why the need to whisper?" queried Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng today.

"We hope he will extend an apology, not only to the journalists involved but all those abused by the police. We need firm action by the PM, and not mere whisperings," he added when met at the Penang legislative assembly.

Lim, the DAP secretary-general, then called for an Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC), as proposed six years ago by a royal commission of inquiry to improve the police force.

The 125 recommendations by the royal commission - including setting up of the IPCMC - must be implemented to ensure that abuse of power by the police does not happen, he added.

Lim said this when referring to Radzi Razak, a journalist at The Sun, who was beaten and warded at the hospital. Najib visited him and "whispered" an apology in his ear.

Lim condemned the harassment and abuse by police on several policemen and journalists - who were either physically abused or had their equipment seized while covering the event.

He described the act as an "attack against press freedom".

KL police, learn from Penang

The Saturday protest - to demand clean and fair elections - saw about 300,000 supporters take to the streets, with their journey ending in mayhem after a group tried to break the barricades to enter Dataran Merdeka, where organisers of Bersih had earlier planned the event.

They had however been rejected by the Kuala Lumpur mayor, who cited a "security issue" as the reason to deny the venue to Bersih, while police managed to obtain a court order to prevent protesters from marching to Dataran.

Meanwhile, Lim urged the Kuala Lumpur police force to emulate their colleagues in Penang who allowed a peaceful gathering of Bersih 3.0 supporters on Saturday.

NONThe situation at the Esplanade, Penang, where more than 7,000 people including Lim took part in the sit-in organised by locally-based social reform movement, Aliran.

Lim said the Penang rally was peaceful as there were no efforts to interrupt the gathering as police made sure that certain quarters were not allowed to create chaos.

"We do not disturb them (when they hold peaceful gatherings), they should not disturb us. We must respect each other's right to gather peacefully," Lim told reporters after attending the opening of the Penang legislative assembly meeting today.

Professional in beating people?

Lim criticised Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein for saying that the police acted “professionally” during the event in Saturday, which left close to 500 people detained and scores injured.

“Perhaps they are professional in beating people?” he quipped, urging Hishammuddin to take responsibility for the violent police behaviour as allowing it would put the country in danger.

He reminded the police about Penang journalists being harassed during two rallies - in June last year and Feb 26 this year- by hostile groups, saying that no action has been taken so far.

On a related issue, Lim called for action to be taken against those who acted violently against the police or public, saying that Pakatan Rakyat does not condone such behaviour.

However, he warned against the presence of “agents provocateurs” in the protest, urging for them to be investigated thoroughly and brought to book.

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