

'Police acted after protesters became aggressive'

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By S Pathmawathy

The police were "forced" to take action to disperse the Bersih 3.0 rally last Saturday because the "protesters behaved aggressively" Inspector-General of Police Ismail Omar said today.

To prove his point, a compilation of video clippings showing protesters "attacking" police vehicles and breaking through barricades placed at the surrounding to Dataran Merdeka were shown to reporters this afternoon.

NONE "If the action was not taken to disperse the crowd, a clash could have taken place and the situation would have become far more dangerous for both parties," Ismail said, reasoning the use of tear gas and water cannons.

"Everything that happened is an offence of rioting. Besides that, they also breached the court order and maybe other laws too," he said.

The seven-minute video started with showing Himpunan Hijau 3.0 supporters marching from the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) to Masjid Jamek, breaking through a police wall on Jalan Ampang.

One protester is seen jumping on the roof of the vehicle, and stomping as the driver speeds ahead.

The next footage shows the police car, crashed outside the Sogo shopping mall, and the protesters are seen overturning the car.

The final scene shows several other police vehicles damaged from the chaos.

'No engagement with the crowd'

More than 500 protesters, including several Bersih and opposition leaders, were arrested and numerous complaints of brutality were made that day after the crackdown. However, Ismail maintained that police acted with "full restraint".

dataran breach barricade cordon 290412 police pix "The one lesson learnt - if laws are followed, this is the problem that arises," Ismail said, referring to the protesters as "rioters".

He added that the police had strictly abided by the "non-engagement" directive issued prior to the rally.

"We acted with full restraint for several hours and only took action to disperse the crowds after the barricades were breached," he said.

"Police personnel guarding the barricades did not take any action against demonstrators until the barricade was breached about 2.55pm," he reiterated.

However, on the allegations of police brutality and vice-versa, Ismail said investigations were under way.

"We take all these complaints seriously and will thoroughly investigate," he said, adding that more than 10 police reports have been lodged.

Asked about complaints from lawyers that they were temporarily barred from those detained on Saturday, Ismail denied the allegation.

"They were free to meet them (the protesters)," he said, but when pressed further he said, the lawyers should lodge an official complaint.

He also requested for evidence that "agent provocateurs" were among the sea of protesters, who were claimed to be the source of instigations for the disturbances during the rally.

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