

Bersih violence planned to distract from huge turnout?

MalaysiaKini.com

May 04, 2012

By Aidila Razak

Were the pockets of violence that took place at the tail end of last Saturday's Bersih 3.0 rally planned to distract attention from the huge turnout that day?

NONETHis is the question raised by Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad today, who said the huge turnout pointed to a crisis in confidence in the electoral system - which has been buried by the focus on the chaos.

"This was a historic turnout. The violence could have been purposely created to cover up the issue with claims of rioting," Khalid told a press conference.

Malaysiakini's estimate of the Bersih crowd is least 100,000, while the organisers have put their estimate at 250,000 protesters.

Khalid said the same question could be asked about the rumours sent into circulation that day about a police officer having died at the hands of protesters.

"Why was the rumour spread? Was it part of the plan to ensure that assembly turns chaotic and to cover up.... the crisis in confidence in the Election Commission?" he asked.

'Police instigated into violence'

He added that politicians's statements before and after the Bersih 3.0 rally, likening it to a riot or a violent revolution "instigated" police heavy-handedness.

"(The BN) spread lies about rioting...and this propaganda led to the police to behave that way. The police are an institution to protect the rakyat, not one to instill fear in people," he said.

bersih 3 rally 030512 01He also said that police had failed to assist Bersih in controlling the crowd and that the multiple rounds of teargas fired at a dispersing crowd had exacerbated the chaos.

"PAS Unit Amal numbered about 5,000...how were they supposed to control 250,000 people? (PM) Najib (Abdul Razak) anticipated this and should have assisted. The tear gas didn't help," he said.

According to Khalid, ignoring the groundswell of Malaysians who have lost faith in the electoral process would only bring detriment to the country.

"If they close their eyes and continue (with the polls), it may lead to serious consequences in terms of the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people and the unity of the rakyat.

"Elections are a democratic medium to solve issues through peaceful means, through respect and consensus. Once there is a crisis of confidence, the whole mechanism is defeated," he said.

He said that the best move for the government now is to acknowledge the crisis and to delay polls until the problems have been solved.

"Don't deny the massive turnout," he said.