

Bersih 3.0 probes must answer 8 key questions

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By Lim Kit Siang

MP SPEAKS Prime Minister Najib Razak is leading the Barisan Nasional propaganda campaign of damage control to minimise the adverse fallout from the government mishandling of Bersih 3.0 'sit-in' at Dataran Merdeka for clean and fair elections with wild and far-fetched allegations, for instance, that Bersih 3.0 was an attempt by the opposition to topple the BN government.

In actual fact, Bersih 3.0 marked the greatest awakening, empowerment and unity among Malaysians transcending race, religion, class, region, gender or age to demonstrate their love for the country and concern for clean elections for a clean Malaysia.

What is undeniable is that Bersih 3.0 is proving to be a bigger public relations disaster for Najib and his image as a 'reformer' and 'transformer' with every passing day.

Suhakam has said that the "heavy-handed and arbitrary manner" in which the police used "disproportionate and unwarranted force against the participants of the rally as well as members of the media" in the Bersih 3.0 rally was "unacceptable conduct" while the Bar Council has said that police brutality against protestors during Bersih 3.0 had worsened as compared to the Bersih 2.0 rally on July 9 last year.

Yesterday, Suhakam announced findings that the police had violated human rights during Bersih 2.0 when they fired tear gas in the vicinity of public amenities like Tung Shin Hospital, Chinese Maternity Hospital and KL Sentral, where public safety was at risk.

Can there be any doubt in the outcome of any full and credible public inquiry on Bersih 3.0 into the human rights violations in the police rampage of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force, whether firing tear gas, chemically-laced water cannon, brutality and violence against peaceful protestors and media representatives?

The Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar has said that he wants justice for all parties concerned, including members of the media and policemen who were injured.

I agree with the IGP that, "Just because there are hooligans in the police force does not mean that the entire organization comprise thugs" - and this is why a full and credible public inquiry must be held to ensure that there is justice for all the Bersih 3.0 victims of brutality and violence - whether police, media representatives or peaceful protestors.

I also agree that the police had acted with utmost restraint and professionalism until about 3pm last Saturday or half an hour after the announcement by the Bersih 3.0 organisers of the ending of the rally and calling for dispersal of the protestors.

It was after 3 pm that there was a breakdown of police restraint and professionalism, where there was a police rampage of violence and brutality.

8 questions to be answered

There are at least eight questions that a full and credible public inquiry into the '428' Bersih 3.0 violence must provide answers.

1. Why was there a police rampage of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force, whether tear-gas, chemically-laced water cannon or physical violence and brutality against peaceful protestors after 3pm and lasting some five hours that day?
2. For those who had broken through the 'barricade' at Dataran Merdeka, why did the police not just take action against them instead of punishing the vast peaceful majority who had gathered in peace and who had wanted to disperse in peace?
3. Why were some police personnel without name tags and numbers?
4. Why were media representatives targeted and attacked by the police, with cameras smashed, memory cards removed?
5. Why were some of the LRT stations ordered to close after the tear gas/water cannon rampage started? Was it the intention of the police to disperse the people or to 'trap' them to 'teach them a lesson'?
6. Is it true that the airwaves were purposely jammed so that communications was hindered causing further confusion in the midst of a tense situation?
7. Who in the police force or the Home Ministry were responsible in giving the green light for these human rights violations that disregarded the principles for the use of force and firearms by police personnel?
8. Whether the time has come for the full implementation of the 125 recommendations of the Dzaidin Police Royal Commission of Inquiry to create an efficient, professional, incorruptible world-class police service focussed on the three core functions of keeping crime low, eradicating corruption and upholding human rights – in particular the establishment of an Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission

According to the parliamentary time-table, Parliament is scheduled to meet for 12 days from June 11 to 28, while the 2013 Budget Parliament is to begin on Sept 24 and will go on for 34 days until Nov 27 – a 34-day meeting. The 2013 Budget Day is scheduled for Friday, September 28 2012.

Najib has to decide in the next few days whether to hold general elections in June or to push it back further.