

Gov't sues Ambiga, 9 others for Bersih 3.0 damage

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By Nigel Aw

The government has initiated a civil suit against Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan and nine other steering committee members for damages allegedly caused during the Bersih 3.0 protest on April 28. The suit was filed on May 15.

Strangely, national laureate and co-chairperson A Samad Said and prominent Bersih steering committee member Hishammuddin Rais were not among the 10.

“Today, at about 3.25pm I was served with a writ and statement of claim whereby the government of Malaysia is claiming damages against me and members of the steering committee for losses purportedly suffered by them in connection with Bersih,” she said when contacted.

The claim, Ambiga added, is likely to be under the new Peaceful Assembly Act 2012.

According to the writ of summons, the Bersih steering committee members are accused of bringing “too many” protesters to the rally and failed to appoint sufficient personnel to ensure the protest was peaceful.

The civil suit is seeking RM122,000 in special damages for 15 police vehicles damaged during the protest, including two water cannon trucks.

“There are also general damages which could be any amount,” said Ambiga.

The writ of summon reads: “The plaintiff states that under section 6(2)(g) of the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 (Act 736), the defendants have a responsibility among others to ensure that the held rally will not cause damage to property.”

It went on to list in detail nine incidents on that day between 3.30pm to 5.30pm in which those vehicles were damaged.

The mention of the case is fixed for June 13 at 9am before High Court judge Dr Prasad Sandosham Abraham.

Asked if the group will be appearing together in court, Ambiga replied: “We will meet tomorrow to discuss and decide the way forward.”

“We may have a few lawyers but the other members deserve to decide whether they want the same lawyers or not,” she said.

The other nine named in the suit are Maria Chin Abdullah, Zaid Kamaruddin, Haris Fathillah Mohamed, K Arumugam, S Arul Prakkash, Wong Chin Huat, Dr Ahmad Farouk Musa, Toh Kin

Woon and Andrew Khoo.

The April 28 protest for clean and fair elections, which organisers claimed attracted some 250,000 participants, had been peaceful and carnival-like but clashes with police began after some protesters breached the barricade at Dataran Merdeka.

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