

Umno rep pleads ignorance over anti-Bersih fracas

MalaysiaKini.com

May 24, 2012

By S Pathmawathy

Umno leaders present at the scene of the Merlimau fracas last Saturday were there to ensure nothing "untoward" occurred, state assemblyperson Roslan Ahmad said, stressing that the crowd had been kept under control at all times.

According to Roslan, several hundred pro-government protestors had turned up to protest near a tea session which was supposed to have featured electoral reform pressure group Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan.

However, this group was not led by any particular person, he said, and he had rushed back to the venue at about 5pm when he was informed of trouble, together with assemblypersons Ghazale Muhamad (Serkam) and Hassan Abdul Rahman (Sungai Rambai).

"We advised them to keep the protest peaceful. We were there until the event ended and nothing violent happened then," said Roslan (left).

"We left when the event was over, in fact, we reminded everyone to disperse as well," he added.

Roslan told Malaysiakini when contacted yesterday that he left at about 6pm as he had a busy schedule for that night.

Returned to disperse protestors

"But I got a call from a police officer, asking me to come back to convince our supporters to disperse.

"I came back and I told them that the event had ended and they have to leave the spot, but I couldn't negotiate with any leader, so when I saw the crowd moving out, I left," he said.

Reiterating that the assembly representatives were only there to keep the peace, Roslan denied having a hand in goading the protestors into acting against Bersih supporters.

"Whatever happened, could have taken place at another spot. We can't be everywhere," he said.

The protest escalated into violence, with eggs and stones thrown at those attending the Bersih event.

DAP assemblypersons Khoo Poay Tiong (Ayer Keroh) and Tey Kok Kiew (Bandar Hilir) were pelted with the missiles as they left the function, resulting in smashed windscreens, broken mirrors and punctured tyres.

Jasin Umno and Malacca Perkasa have confirmed that their members organised and attended the

protest in front of the venue where the high-tea event was to be held, though both professed ignorance of the rioting by some in the crowd.

He added that claims of their involvement in the protest "were manipulated" to portray that they were "trying to instigate racism".

"That was not definitely not what happened. We gathered to protest at the event because we don't want to encourage such a culture. We are Malaysians and we have lived harmoniously all these years," said Roslan.

He accused the opposition of unfairly linking Umno to the incident just to "tarnish" their image.

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