

Hisham: Video withheld so as not to pre-empt Bersih panel

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By Nigel Aw

Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said his ministry's video clip of the Bersih 3.0 rally was withheld because of the government appointed panel to probe the rally.

Speaking to reporters today, Hishammuddin said his ministry wanted to avoid accusations that the video would pre-empt the panel's work.

"We don't want to pre-empt the panel. We abide by procedures and good practices, they should be given the space (to investigate)," he said.

On June 3, Hishammuddin announced that his ministry will release the video clip to allow the public to judge for themselves on what took place during the rally.

Critics argued that the video clip would compromise the integrity of the panel - which reports to the home ministry - and it was designed to counter video clips of police brutality circulating online.

Hishammuddin said that for now, the only people that can view the video is the panel itself, which is led by former inspector-general of police Hanif Omar.

Previously, Hanif had announced that the panel has access to 43 police-produced video clips, totalling 73 hours of footages, which the panel will review.

Hishammuddin said that his ministry might still release the video after the panel had viewed it and provide feedback.

"There is no reason why they cannot be given two or three days to see the video, it does not affect us and we will screen it after we get their views," he said.

However, Hishammuddin did not specify a time frame for which the video will be released.

'Youth are with us'

Earlier, Hishammuddin attended the closing of the Youth Squad rally which saw some 15,000 people from various uniformed volunteer corps showing up.

"Today shows that a majority of youth want to be with us (the government) in helping to develop the country.

"Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's transformation is a constructive one, not a transformation through street demonstrations, not to create chaos by hitting police and flipping cars," he said.

Hishammuddin later led the crowd to spirited chants of "we want peace" and later said: "Looks like CNN, Aljazeera and BBC have not heard the voice of our youths", in reference to their coverage of the Bersih 3.0 protest.

Speaking at the press conference later, Hishammuddin said the charged atmosphere by the youths earlier was an example of how easily they could be roused.

"But the question is to rouse them for constructive purposes or for destruction," he said in an apparent swipe against the electoral reform group Bersih.

He added the event today was a beginning for youths to be mobilised for constructive purposes instead to of being influenced for negative action and "sowing hatred" in them to create chaos.

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