

DBKL slaps RM351k 'Bersih bill' on Ambiga, Maria

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By Kuek Ser Kuang Keng

Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) has sent a notice of demand to Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan and committee member Maria Chin Abdullah, demanding compensation of RM351,203.45 for “losses” incurred during the Bersih 3.0 rally.

They were ordered to settle the bill together with a RM100 notice fee within 14 days of receiving the notice, failing which legal action would be taken against them.

The letter, signed by DBKL director-general Salleh Yusup, was hand-delivered to Ambiga's house this morning.

Salleh even attached an itemised bill for ‘damages’ incurred by each department of DBKL.

This included damage to landscaping and trees, the cost of setting up metal barricades, cost of transport and support staff, damage to signboards and barriers, as well as overtime allowances, food, drink and transport costs for law enforcers.

The letter says the mayor had banned the rally to be held at Dataran Merdeka because the square is a historic place and tourist attraction.

It points out that the ban was supported by the police and a Kuala Lumpur magistrate who had on April 26 issued an injunction prohibiting any rally at Dataran Merdeka from April 28 to May 1.

“...but you (Ambiga and Maria) had gone ahead to hold the Bersih 3.0 rally on April 28, 2012, which went out of control and caused chaos in Kuala Lumpur city and damages to public properties.

“As a result of the Bersih 3.0 rally, the Kuala Lumpur mayor had suffered the following damages, and you are responsible as the organiser of the Bersih 3.0 rally,” the letter says.

In an immediate response, the Ambiga and Maria described the demand as a “targeted harassment” against them and said they would defend themselves “vigorously”.

Another Bersih co-chairperson, national laureate A Samad Said, and other steering committee members are not mentioned in the letter.

The street rally to demand for clean and fair elections was attended by more than 100,000 people. It began as a peaceful and jovial rally before the barriers were removed, and police responded by firing tear gas and chemical-laced water into the crowd.

Reporters and protesters said they were violently assaulted and detained by the police, but there

were also incidents of police being injured by angry protesters.

Two policemen have since been charged with assaulting a photographer with Chinese newspaper Guang Ming Daily.

The government has set up an independent panel headed by former federal police chief Hanif Omar to look into the allegations.

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