

Bersih raps BN leaders over 'political violence' remarks

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By Ram Anand

The coalition for clean and fair elections (Bersih) has rapped BN deputy head Muhyiddin Yassin and MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek for remarks that 'could lead to more political violence' during the ongoing election campaign.

Bersih's special committee on the code of conduct pertaining to political violence and code of conduct of the caretaker government said such statements could also deter voters from voting or lead to a change in their voting decision.

Muhyiddin and Soi Lek had blamed last week's incidents of political violence on Pakatan Rakyat as well as failed to condemn such actions, noted committee member Jerald Joseph (right).

"Any caretaker minister who fails to condemn political violence does not qualify to be a candidate," he told a press conference in Petaling Jaya today.

"We urge them (politicians) to denounce political violence and not keep silent ... instead they are (making) negative statements on the matter. Muhyiddin is opening up a way for his supporters to be violent too."

Last week, Chua had blamed Pakatan Rakyat's alleged "politics of hatred" for the attacks on the BN's general operations room in Nibong Tebal, Penang.

Muhyiddin (left) had followed suit over the weekend, telling a gathering in Perlis that Pakatan is guilty of "aggressive behaviour" and that it has shown no political etiquette on the campaign trail.

Bersih described the Election Commission's (EC) silence and lack of action on incidents of political violence and related statements by politicians as "shocking."

"Promoting feelings of ill-will and hostility during elections is an offence under the Elections Act 1954, so the EC does have a role to play here," he said, adding that fearmongering could deter voters from going to the polls.

Print media, Khalid commended

The committee's co-chair Irene Fernandez stressed that the incidents of political violence cannot be described as being "not serious".

"What is serious? Is death considered to be serious? We don't want deaths. We don't want it to go to that extent," she said.

"Any political party that instills fear in the people is a bankrupt political party."

She praised the print media's coverage of the incidents as an example of "better reporting" this time around.

Irene also praised caretaker Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim for not promising an allocation to a temple that he was visiting

"Apparently, ... he said he would not promise such allocations, otherwise Bersih would condemn him again," she said.

"It's good to know that he is now aware of the role of a caretaker government."

Irene and Bersih had previously ticked off Khalid's caretaker administration for having handed out land titles and promising bonuses to state employees.

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