

Bersih unable to meet immigration head

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By Lee Long Hui

Bersih was unable to meet Immigration Department director-general Alias Ahmad today to discuss the cancellation of passports of 6,564 'blacklisted' Malaysians abroad.

NONECo-chairperson S Ambiga said the election reform pressure group was told that Alias was at a meeting this morning when she and steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah (left) went to his office.

Speaking to the press later, Ambiga said Bersih had sent letter last Friday and again yesterday, seeking an appointment for today.

"We had been told that we would be contacted and given an appointment and we hope that we can meet with (Alias) next week to seek an explanation on ... passports which will be cancelled," she said.

She said Bersih wants to know whether students who are studying overseas had been "punished" because they participated in Bersih rallies.

"(Is this) because they disagree with the government? Is that the basis? We want to know why they are intimidating the people overseas, so we need to seek clarification on that," she said, adding that authorities should disclose the names on the list as Bersih wishes to inform the persons involved.

Alias had denied a Berita Harian report quoting him as citing Section 8 of the Immigration Act 1959/63 or the Passports Act 1966 to support the decision to cancel the passports of blacklisted Malaysians.

Prepared to go to court

However, by referring to the case of Federal Government vs Loh Wai Kong 1979, he insisted that the government has the right to "issue, not issue, delay the issuance of or revoke a passport".

He also confirmed that the department has 6,564 people on its blacklist and said that their passports will be cancelled according to the Passports Act.

NONE However, Alias (right) said this will be done "justly" and would only largely only those overseas.

Nevertheless, Ambiga dismissed such statement, stressing that the department does not have the right to do so.

She added that a court case in 2009 had disapproved the decision of the judgment in the above-mentioned 1979 case.

"(Based on) my own view, under the Immigration Act, no (they can't do this). I know that he came out and clarified that there's a federal court case in 1979, but we have also found further case in 2009 that disapproved of that case, so I want to also explain that to him when I see him," she said.

She said in the worst case scenario, Bersih is prepared to take this matter up in court.

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