

'No double standard, pro-Najib rallies also probed'

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The police have vowed to apply the same standard to both BN and Pakatan Rakyat supporters who organise rallies without police permits, Penang police chief Abdul Rahim Hanafi said today.

Rahim refuted allegations that police practised double standards when dealing with BN and Pakatan rally organisers.

If the Turun rally to oppose price hikes at Bandar Sunway in Seberang Jaya on Sunday does not have a permit, organisers will be hauled up under the Peaceful Assembly Act.

"They will be subjected to the same law. They will be probed under Section 9 of the Act, which states, among others, that organisers have to give police 10 days' notice (prior to) an event," Rahim told Malaysiakini when contacted yesterday.

Earlier, when asked about the rally, he said, "Let it be (lantaklah)".

Quickly adding, almost in a jest, he said, "Let the prices go up, let the people make some money, (but) there must be checks and balances."

Dubbed Turun 2.0, the rally organised by a coalition of NGOs against increasing prices of essential items and the new goods and services tax (GST) is scheduled to be held from 2pm to 4pm at Bandar Sunway's open parking lot.

This follows the anti-price hike rally held in Kuala Lumpur on Dec 31, which, despite strong police warnings of chaos and attempts to overthrow the government, proceeded peacefully with a crowd of more than 10,000.

Among key Pakatan leaders attending the Sunday rally will be PKR Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli and Machang Bubuk assemblyperson Lee Khai Loon, who shot to fame after he organised a flash mob in Alma to feed a replica of Prime Minister Najib Razak with 10kg of kangkung (water spinach).

Defamation by kangkung

Lee was questioned by police on Wednesday, for criminal defamation under Section

500 of the Penal Code.

The PKR assemblyperson's flash mob last Wednesday lampooned Najib's Jan 12 speech in Kemaman, Terengganu, where made the 'kangkung price has fallen and yet the government is not praised' remark.

Irked by Lee ridiculing the prime minister, pro-Najib supporters retaliated with two counter-rallies last weekend.

On Saturday, they carried a number of inflammatory banners, including one with words 'Due to DAP leaders mouths, May 13 happened... Want some more?'

The second rally on Sunday was marred by violence, where several protesters beat up two passers-by, claiming they had uttered racist remarks.

Among the pro-Najib protesters were state Umno secretary Musa Sheikh Fadzir, Penang Malay Congress president Rahmad Isahak, as well as Pekida and Perkasa members.

Umno supreme council member and Kepala Batas MP Reezal Merican Naina Merican, who attended the first rally, later distanced the party from the offensive banner and the violence, but blamed Lee for bringing the matter upon himself.

Still under probe

Meanwhile, Rahim, when asked whether any suspect was arrested for allegedly attacking the two men on Sunday, shot back: "We can't just arrest people like that.

"We are currently questioning some people and we will wrap up the probe with a report, and submit it to Bukit Aman for further action."

Rahim said the police were also questioning several individuals involved in displaying the 'May 13' banner.

Both the pro-Najib rallies last weekend did not have police permits.

However, Rahim declined to furnish more details on how many have been questioned over these rallies.

