

## **Drop probe on Anwar, Bersih tells cops**

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The coalition for clean and fair elections Bersih has urged the police to drop its investigation against PKR's would-be Kajang by-election candidate under the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012.

In a statement, Bersih said that the constitutionality of the Act is still pending in court.

"Bersih is currently challenging the constitutionality of the Act in its counterclaim in the suit concerning the Bersih 3 rally, in which the police are demanding a compensation of RM112,000 from us for damage of police vehicles.

"Bersih will stand by Anwar Ibrahim or any candidate against any unconstitutional violation of their right to peaceful assembly," it said in a statement.

It added that "selective" use of the Act against a by-election candidate undermines the fairness of the polls.

Berita Harian yesterday reported that police have opened investigation papers under the Act to probe Anwar over a campaign rally he hosted in Kajang.

This followed Election Commission chief Abdul Aziz Yusof's remark that the EC cannot act as the campaign period will only commence on March 11.

In response, Anwar had said that although BN has yet to name a candidate, BN leaders have been actively campaigning for the coalition through statements in the media.

'No such thing as voters overly-informed'

On this matter, Bersih said that although the campaign has not officially begun "there is no such thing as voters being overly informed".

"Unofficial campaign before nomination cannot do voters any harm as they get more time to consider their option and the consequences of their choice," it said.

However, it said the EC is "duty-bound" to act on any electoral misconduct even

those outside the official campaign period.

"The EC is duty-bound to ensure the Kajang by-election, as any other election, to be free of bribery, treating, intimidation, outright vote-buying, hate speech against any social groups (be it ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender or lifestyle), smear campaigns, one-sided media reporting and violence," it said.

It also clarified a report by The Malaysian Insider where Bersih was reported to have stated that both BN and PKR have contravened election rules by campaigning before March 11.

Chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah clarified that what she had said was that the EC was not being even-handed by singling out Anwar over the issue of early campaigning.

"Bersih urges all media to uphold the highest standard of professionalism in their reporting to ensure fairness to both the reported parties and the public," it said.

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