

Bersih defends Dr M after police open probe

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Bersih has come to Dr Mahathir Mohamad's defence after police announced today they will investigate the former prime minister's anti-government remarks made when he dropped in at the Bersih 4 rally last weekend.

Bersih chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah said Mahathir was merely one of many other protesters at the rally.

"There is no need (for police) to call him (Mahathir) up or any other participant at the Bersih 4 gathering," Maria told journalists outside the Bukit Aman federal police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur today.

Maria (photo), along with six other Bersih leaders who were part of the team organising the rally on Aug 29 and 30, were summoned by police today for their statements to be recorded.

The are being investigated under Sections 120, 124C and 141 of the Penal Code.

Section 120 of the Penal Code deals with the concealment of plans to commit an offence, while Section 141 criminalises unlawful assemblies.

However, the most serious offence cited against the seven falls under Section 124C, which deals with "attempt to commit activity detrimental to parliamentary democracy" and carries a penalty of up to 15 years of imprisonment upon conviction.

Apart from Maria, the others called for questioning are Bersih deputy chairperson Sarajun Hoda Abdul Hassan, treasurer Masjaliza Hamzah, steering committee members Farhana Abdul Halim and Fadiyah Nadwa Fikri, and secretariat members Mandeep Singh and Adam Adli Abdul Halim.

This morning, inspector-general of police Khalid Abu Bakar announced that police would also record Mahathir's statement for his remarks at the Bersih 4 protest.

Mahathir, who turned up for a few minutes on both days of the protest, had said he "did not care" about Bersih 4's demands and was only there to call for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's resignation.

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