

Hanif Should Be The Last Person To Head Panel
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By Lim Kit Siang

It is most ironical that the Prime Minister, Najib Razak said in an interview on Sinar.FM radio station this morning that as Prime Minister he could not even afford a single mistake, and "if we have to make 10 major decisions, we need to get 10 out of 10 right", as he had just made probably his worst decision in his three-year premiership.

This is the appointment of former Inspector-General of Police, Hanif Omar as chairman of the six-member Independent Advisory Panel to investigate the Bersih 3.0 violence and brutality.

Right from the second after the announcement by the Home Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein last evening, Hanif's appointment as the head of the Bersih 3.0 panel had received immediate brickbats and all-round disapprobation and condemnation as being utterly inappropriate, rendering the whole probe not only lacking in independence but totally bereft of credibility and legitimacy.

I do not think it is possible to find another announcement of the composition of a public inquiry by the government in the nation's 54-year history which had attracted such instant and all-round rejection and condemnation by major national stakeholders in the country!

The answer is very obvious. Hanif is the last person to head the probe of Bersih 3.0 violence as nobody would believe that he could be impartial and unbiased after he had publicly supported Najib's irresponsible, wild and baseless allegation that Bersih 3.0 "sit-in" at Dataran Merdeka on April 28 was a coup d'etat attempt by the opposition to topple the government when there is not one iota of evidence whatsoever.

And what is Hanif's proof for him to endorse Najib's wild and far-fetched allegation of Bersih 3.0 as a coup to topple the government?

This is Hanif's lame response as reported by Berita Minggu (6th May): "Sudah tentu ia berasas kerana Perdana Menteri tidak bercakap begitu saja. Ia memang boleh berlaku. Orang yang menunggu peluang melaku sesuatu demi kepentingan diri memang ada setiap masa." ("There has to be a basis because the prime minister cannot simply make claims. It could happen and there are always people bidding their chance to do it for their own interest.")

Berita Minggu also reported Hanif as saying that Najib must have made the allegation after receiving intelligence from the Special Branch.

The question is whether Najib received "intelligence" from the Special Branch that Bersih 3.0 was a coup attempt by the Opposition to topple the government before or after Bersih 3.0 on April 28, and if it was before, why Hishammuddin as Home Minister was given a different intelligence briefing causing him to say that Bersih 3.0 was not a security threat as it had "little traction" with the people?

Furthermore, why didn't Najib reveal such intelligence of a coup attempt to topple the government before April 28?

If the Bersih 3.0 Panel is going to be a comprehensive and authoritative probe into the Bersih 3.0 violence, both Najib and Hishammuddin should appear before it to give testimony about the "intelligence" they had received about Bersih 3.0, both before and after April 28.

In fact, Hanif is the last person to be considered to head the Bersih 3.0 probe as he should be one of the inquiry's "star" witnesses to substantiate his allegations that Bersih 3.0 was a coup attempt which involved pro-communist sympathizers!

On May 1, at 6.25 pm, Bernama carried the following report which was published by New Straits Times the next morning as follows:

'Pro-communist elements seen at Bersih rally'

SHAH ALAM: Former inspector-general of police Tun Hanif Omar said pro-communist individuals involved in the 1970s demonstrations were seen in Saturday's rally in Kuala Lumpur, which turned violent.

"I recognise from the photos and broadcast images (taken from the rally), the pro-communist people who were involved in the 1970s demonstrations," Hanif said yesterday.

"The tactics of using provocateurs to cause the demonstrators to clash with police and to bring children along in the hope they would get injured were tactics learnt from past pro-communist demonstrations."

Hanif was clarifying a Bernama report on Monday which quoted him as saying that the gathering could have been masterminded by various parties, including several individuals who tried to spread the communist ideology. (Bernama)

Hanif should appear before the probe into the Bersih 3.0 violence to substantiate not only his endorsement of the Prime Minister's wild allegation that Bersih 3.0 was a coup attempt to topple the government, but his own allegation of involvement of "pro-communist individuals involved in the 1970s demonstrations" in Bersih 3.0 using "pro-communist", "provocateur tactics" "to cause the demonstrators to clash with police and to bring children along in the hope they would get injured".

Without casting any aspersions on Hanif's integrity, I would respectfully suggest that he should spare himself, the Bersih 3.0 probe and the Najib administration any public embarrassment by declining appointment as head of the Bersih 3.0 probe, for the simple reason that he should be appearing before it as a "star witness" rather than its head, in view of his publicly declared position on Bersih 3.0 rally.

Apart from Hanif's appointment as head, the composition of the members (in particular the exclusion of representatives from Suhakam and Bar Council) as well as the lack of a proper and acceptable terms of reference are also matters of grave concern to all Malaysians who would want to see a truly impartial inquiry into the Bersih 3.0 violence to ensure that justice is done to all victims of Bersih 3.0 violence and brutality, regardless of whether police, media representatives or peaceful protestors and to demonstrate that Malaysia is capable of maturing to become the world's best democracy.

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