

Police Bersih probe not over, says Hisham
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 25 — Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein clarified today that investigations by six teams into alleged police brutality during the July 9 Bersih rally had not yet been completed.

This comes after Bukit Aman made public last week a video report that concluded that police officers exercised restraint and were provoked by protesters.

“It is still ongoing,” he said when asked by reporters today. “The video is not the result, just what police has recorded. It is incumbent on police to do a thorough job.”

Hishammuddin was speaking after he signed a refugee swap agreement between Malaysia and Australia with Australian Minister of Immigration and Citizenship Chris Bowen in Kuala Lumpur.

Police last Thursday screened video clips to reporters that showed police giving warning shouts to protesters before turning on water cannons or firing tear gas canisters.

It claimed that one video clip showed PKR vice-president Chua Tian Chang running towards police officers in KL Sentral while another clip angle showed protesters “running” towards a Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) water cannon truck near Dataran Maybank.

The Malaysian Insider reported on Wednesday that Bersih organisers and independent observers have yet to be called by police to record their statements or give evidence.

Hishammuddin today said they would be given their say before the inquiry into the July 9 march calling for free and fair elections was completed.

“We cannot have results immediately but will have to take into account police reports and the various memorandums that have been submitted,” the Sembrong MP said.

The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition has been on the defensive over the rally as international media from Singapore to the UK criticised the government’s handling of public dissent.

Bersih claimed that 50,000 people showed up for its rally despite efforts to prevent the gathering from taking place. Police said there were 6,000.

The protest turned chaotic when police fired tear gas and water cannons at demonstrators, resulting in nearly 1,700 arrests, scores injured and the death of former military man Baharuddin Ahmad, 59.

The government has promised to investigate allegations of police brutality while the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) will hold a separate public inquiry into police conduct during the rally.

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