

End charade over yellow T-shirt, Bersih ban, Kit Siang tells Najib
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 20 — Veteran DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang wants Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to revoke the Home Ministry's ban on Bersih 2.0 and drop all charges against the 1,600 people arrested for wearing yellow T-shirts and allegedly taking part in the July 9 peaceful but illegal rally.

The Ipoh Timur MP called Putrajaya's actions over the last two months a "government charade" and urged Najib to end it immediately, saying the arrests and charges were not the way forward to deal with claims the present electoral system was flawed.

Neither was arguing that the rival Pakatan Rakyat (PR) pact would have lost in the five states it gained in Election 2008 or managed to deny the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition its traditional two-thirds majority in Parliament the proper answer to the BN's dilemma, the opposition lawmaker said.

"The high-handed government and police action on Bersih 2.0 rally has brought the worst publicity and image to Malaysia during Najib's short tenure as prime minister," Lim (picture) said in a statement today, marking the sixth Saturday since the rally last month.

He urged Najib and BN ministers to repair their gross misjudgment and mishandling of the Bersih 2.0 rally and demonstrate respect for the people's peaceful and patriotic expression regardless of race and religion.

"Let the prime minister and all Barisan Nasional ministers come out openly to admit that they had gravely mishandled the Bersih 2.0 rally for free and fair elections, which are the most pertinent, legitimate and democratic aspirations of right-thinking Malaysians so that the Malaysian electoral process can win the support, confidence and legitimacy of Malaysian voters," he said.

The DAP politician reminded Najib that Bersih 2.0 managed to achieve what the PM had been promoting since taking office but yet to complete — uniting Malaysians of all colour, creed, gender and age.

Najib had announced the setting up of a bipartisan parliamentary select committee to discuss electoral reforms earlier this week, admitting his administration had mishandled the Bersih 2.0 rally last month.

Police locked down the capital city on July 9 but nearly 50,000 people took to the streets to call for free and fair elections.

A similar rally in November 2007 was credited for BN's poor showing in national polls held in March 2008, where the ruling coalition lost its customary two-thirds parliamentary majority and four more states.

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