

Pakatan: PM, Home Minister and IGP to blame for Tung Shin incident
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 5 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) blamed the prime minister, home minister and police chief today for inciting riot police against marchers during the July 9 Bersih rally, leading to tear gas and water cannon being fired at those converging on Tung Shin hospital during the march for free and fair elections.

PAS lawmakers said in Parliament that the Najib administration had painted a picture of demonstrators as traitors intent on toppling the government.

“They accused the marchers of trying to overthrow the administration, as if these people were enemies of the state,” PAS vice president Datuk Mahfuz Omar told The Malaysian Insider in the lobby of Parliament later.

PAS lawmakers said today the Najib administration had painted a picture of demonstrators as traitors intent on toppling the government. — file pic

His colleague Khalid Samad also said accusations that the federal opposition wanted to install Bersih chief Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan, a Hindu, as prime minister, had incited racial tension among the mainly Malay police force.

“This was what caused them to not follow the standard operating procedure (SOP),” the Shah Alam MP told Parliament.

Home Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Mahmood Adam said last night that errant policemen who attacked marchers near the hospital during the rally would be referred to the police’s disciplinary board.

“The investigation results concluded that there were unethical actions which were beyond the SOP of the Royal Malaysian Police when enforcement was performed on rally participants who were wrongly using the hospital premises,” Mahmood had said in a statement.

PKR secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution also said that police officers were “victims” of orders by Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar and Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

He said that the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) had recommended that the government improve the police’s ability to handle mass protests after a similar demonstration in 2000 saw tens of thousands crowding the Kesas Highway also being dispersed with tear gas and water cannon.

“This shows the government has not taken any steps to ensure there is no repeat of such incidents,” the Machang MP said.

Putrajaya and the police had earlier denied any wrongdoing despite proof to the contrary as provided by Bersih and those at the rally.

Suhakam is now waiting for the police to answer questions on the incident after a complaint from Bersih, which held the rally to call for free and fair elections.

Police had absolved themselves of any wrongdoing during the July 9 rally after setting up six internal teams to investigate claims of police brutality that followed after nearly 1,700 were arrested, scores injured and an ex-soldier died during chaotic scenes in the capital.

But Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai ordered a second probe into the Tung Shin incident on July 14 after a group of medical consultants had written to the media refuting statements by the hospital board and the police who both claimed that no tear gas or water cannon were fired into the hospital compound.

Bersih has also called on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to take responsibility for the misconduct of police officers.

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