

Najib lets cops decide on Bersih arrests
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PUTRAJAYA, July 5 — Despite agreeing to meet with Bersih 2.0 to arrange a rally venue, Datuk Seri Najib Razak today passed the buck to the police to decide whether to proceed with its nationwide pre-rally clampdown on supporters.

“That is the police’s action. You have to ask the police,” he said when asked if he would order the release of all those detained in connection with the rally.

The police have arrested more than 200 people, including opposition politicians and activists, in connection with the Bersih rally.

Six Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) members, including Sungai Siput MP Dr Michael Jeyakumar, have also been detained under the Emergency Ordinance.



Many have been detained or roped in for questioning for sporting yellow Bersih T-shirts or displaying Bersih materials, which the government has declared as illegal.

When asked if in view of the ban, Bersih rally participants would still be arrested for wearing the coalition’s signature yellow T-shirts, even in the stadium, Najib **(picture)** declined to comment.

“That is up to the police to decide,” he repeated.

The prime minister also refused to say today that if by allowing Bersih 2.0 to stage its rally indoors, he was effectively overruling the Home Ministry’s decision to outlaw the loose coalition.

“This is a point whereby we consider them illegal but they don’t consider themselves as illegal but what’s most important is public interest.

“I want to protect the Malaysian public from any untoward incidences and that is why I do not want this street demonstration to take place,” he told a brief press conference at his office here this afternoon.

He had earlier declared the government's willingness to meet Bersih 2.0 officials to decide on an appropriate venue for their planned rally this Saturday.

Bersih 2.0 chairman Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan, fresh from an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong this afternoon, announced that the coalition had decided to call off its street rally but would instead accept the government's offer to hold it in a stadium.

Last week, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein declared all pro-Bersih materials as illegal and that action would be taken against those found wearing or in possession of them.

He had also declared Bersih 2.0 an outlawed organisation, saying it was inciting people to create an atmosphere of unrest.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar has echoed Hishammuddin's orders and warned last week that the police will not only arrest those sporting Bersih T-shirts but may also take action against anyone using any medium to promote the illegal rally.

"Not just T-shirts but shoes, cars, buses. If these are the tools used to encourage people to gather (illegally), this amounts to sedition," he had said.

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