

UPSI demo: Cop says scuffles happened in heat of moment
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 1 — A Perak police officer defended today the force's rough treatment and subsequent arrest of student activists, who refused to disperse in a pre-dawn campus rally, saying scuffles happened in the heat of the moment and were not planned.

The boys in blue have come under fire from opposition parties following complaints from about 60 undergraduate demonstrators who took part in a midnight sit-down protest against the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) at the Sultan Idris University of Education (UPSI) campus in Tanjung Malim, Perak.

"During confrontations, scuffles can happen. These are unplanned and during the heat of the moment, things can happen and get out of control," a policeman told The Malaysian Insider, playing down the allegations of assault that have emerged.

He identified himself as an investigating officer (IO) and only gave his name as Fazli.

"This is an old issue, people always like to play it up, just like Bersih," the IO said, referring to the electoral reform coalition's massive July 9 rally in the national capital last year.

The undergraduates from various public universities here claim they were beaten, punched and kicked by both uniformed and plainclothes policemen after refusing to heed orders to disperse.

One university student Muhammad Safwan Anang, who is president of undergraduate movement Gerakan Menuntut Kebebasan Akademik (Bebas), was warded at the Slim River Hospital after losing consciousness.

He is believed to have also lost a few teeth and suffered fractured bones in the 2.30am incident.

Up to 17 individuals were arrested by the police and taken to the Tanjung Malim police station this morning.

News and pictures of the incident were shared through Twitter and Facebook, triggering condemnations against the police force for brutality.

Several lawyers who rushed to the Tanjung Malim police station claimed they were barred from speaking to the detained undergraduates.

Fazli denied the allegation.

"The lawyers were never prevented from meeting with the students and are with them now. N. Surendran is inside," the police officer said, referring to the prominent lawyer who is also PKR vice-president.

Fazli said he could not comment further as his colleagues were still in the midst of recording

statements from those arrested.

"I will let my superiors decide once we finish taking statements from the students," he said.

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