

Big mess after Bersih

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PETALING JAYA: A day after the massive Bersih 3.0 demonstration that shook the nation's capital, the focus has shifted to who is to be blamed for the violence and for the mess and destruction left behind.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has squarely blamed the demonstration organisers helmed by Datuk S. Ambiga, saying they should be held responsible for the injuries and damage to property.

He said the Government had laid down laws for a peaceful assembly and offered alternative venues for the gathering but these were rejected by the organisers.

"As we can see, what occurred was a form of riot in which police were attacked and properties were damaged," Muhyiddin said after launching the National Education Dialogue 2012.

He also chided Pakatan Rakyat leaders for inciting anger among the crowd.

"Even if Barisan Nasional wins the next general election, they (Pakatan) will attempt this again to influence the minds of the rakyat to think that the election results are falsified," he said.

However, Ambiga said the violence would not have erupted if police had not fired tear gas and water cannon at the protesters.

The reaction of the police also came under question as footage of alleged heavy-handedness were circulated with witness accounts of uniformed personnel assaulting protesters.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein insisted that the police had acted professionally but the Bar Council, which sent 80 observers, claimed otherwise.

Video clips and pictures of protesters attacking policemen and their vehicles have also raised questions as to whether a peaceful demonstration was really on the minds of those who had gathered.

Police arrested 512 people by the time the rally ended. All have been released from the temporary detention centre at the Police Training Centre.

City Police Chief DCP Datuk Mohamad Salleh said that of the number, 30 were women. Five children, aged between nine and 15, were taken to the detention centre as they were with the adults who were detained.

"A total of 57 police reports were lodged with regards to the gathering, including eight from injured policemen and nine on damaged police vehicles," he said in a statement yesterday.

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