

Bersih: Dataran Merdeka or bust
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 22 — The Bersih 3.0 rally must be held at Dataran Merdeka as there is too little time to change the venue, Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan said today.

The Bersih co-chairman told The Malaysian Insider that the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) had “no basis” to reject Bersih’s request to have its event there, and pledged to co-operate with the police as well as DBKL for this coming Saturday’s sit-in.

“I sincerely believe that there can be no objections to Dataran Merdeka (being the venue for Bersih 3.0) and we will co operate fully with the authorities for a smooth gathering, as well as DBKL.

“I have no mandate to change the venue without consulting the endorsing NGOs,” she said in a text message.

“We will have to go back to them but the problem we have is that we have very little time to make changes,” she added.

Ambiga’s co-chairman, Datuk A. Samad Said, echoed her words, saying that the rally must be held at Dataran Merdeka and nowhere else.

He stressed that the electoral reforms group should not be pressured into accepting other venues for the rally.

“We still want Dataran Merdeka. I will discuss with Ambiga about the location, but we still want Dataran Merdeka,” the national literary icon told The Malaysian Insider.

The Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) recently rejected Bersih’s request to hold the rally at the historic square on April 28, saying that the venue was only for “national-level events.”

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said today DBKL should offer alternative venues for Bersih 3.0 if it does not want the rally to be held at Dataran Merdeka, and suggested Stadium Merdeka as an option.

He stressed that the electoral reforms group should be allowed to have a “peaceful assembly”, and previously added that the government does not see the rally as a “security threat” — a far cry from Putrajaya’s attitude in locking down the capital city at the last rally.

But Bersih steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah was a little more tentative, saying that the various NGOs under the Bersih umbrella would have to meet before deciding on their next move.

“We will meet tomorrow night to discuss and make an announcement on Tuesday,” she told The Malaysian Insider.

She said that Bersih would also be meeting the police tomorrow at 3pm to discuss traffic logistics for the protest.

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