

Peaceful Rally Turns Rowdy - Who Is Behind It?

Bernama

April 28, 2012

By Mohd Yusof Saari

KUALA LUMPUR, April 28 (Bernama) -- Was the peaceful rally calling for clean and fair election, which turned unruly and caused damage to public properties this afternoon, the result of political parties hijacking the assembly?

BERSIH co-chairman Datuk S. Ambiga, who was former Bar Council president, had given an assurance that the protestors would respect a court order that forbade them from entering the Merdeka Square.

In fact, shortly after 2pm when the number of protestors had allegedly met the target, Ambiga was reported to have ordered them to disperse.

This showed that Ambiga, who was instrumental in organising the rally, had kept her word.

However, BERSIH steering committee member Wong Chin Huat said the directive did not filter through, especially among protestors who had gathered in the vicinity of the Merdeka Square.

The rally turned chaotic when a group of demonstrators crashed into a barricade to enter the Merdeka Square, prompting members of the Federal Reserve Unit to shoot water canon and tear gas against them.

Accompanied by thousands of protestors, Ambiga earlier made her way to Jalan Tun Perak near the Merdeka Square from the Central Market.

Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim arrived at the junction at the head of thousands of protestors from the National Mosque.

Just before leaving the National Mosque, Anwar, who is also Member of Parliament for Permatang Pauh, in an impromptu speech, told the protestors to "liberate the Merdeka Square" which he described as a colonial square.

"We will march to the Merdeka Square come what may," he said, reminding them to set aside the fear of being arrested by the authorities.

According to witnesses, the protesters, who crashed into a barricade, looked like they had gone berserk.

They defied the police who had warned them three times to disperse before firing tear gas and water canon.

The demonstrators reacted violently by hurling mineral water bottles towards police vans and patrol cars, overturning a police patrol car, kicking a motorcycle mounted by a

policewoman and grabbing a pistol belonging to a policeman.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the police had recovered the gun.

Some protestors also deliberately brought along small children and used them as human shields.

---BERNAMA

Copyright © 2012 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/bm/newsindex.php?id=662622>