

MCA says members can join Bersih 3.0 rally
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, April 26 — MCA gave its green light today to members interested in participating in Bersih 3.0 despite rejecting the group's reason for holding the protest this Saturday.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek told a press conference here that the party would not take action against members who choose to join the rally for free and fair elections out of respect for their democratic right to assemble.

"Bersih has the right to hold its demonstration... the Peaceful Assembly Act was passed last year," he pointed out.

But despite this, Dr Chua (picture) stressed that Bersih's accusations against Barisan Nasional (BN) and the Election Commission regarding discrepancies in the electoral roll are grossly inaccurate.

He said the group has been wrongfully claiming of an unnatural spike in voters in numerous constituencies and blaming this on the BN.

But, pointed out Dr Chua, the spike was caused by both BN and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in their registration of thousands of new voters in the electoral roll.

He cited Selangor as an example, saying that between January 2011 and February this year, BN had registered some 81,000 new voters, thus adding to the increase in new voters.

But PR, he said, had registered a whopping 108,000 new voters, some 29,000 more than BN.

"So it is wrong to say that the increase was because of BN... the increase was contributed by both BN and PR," he said.

Dr Chua stressed that MCA too wants a clean electoral roll and was willing to work together with any party, including those from the opposition, to ensure this.

He also slammed Bersih for its refusal to back down from holding this weekend's protest at an alternative venue other than the iconic Dataran Merdeka.

He accused the election watchdog of attempting to hoodwink Malaysians into thinking that the government was attempting to block the rally by prohibiting its use of Dataran Merdeka.

"They want to show that the government is flip-flopping and going against the new Act. But

MCA wants to point out that if you are holding the demonstration because you are not satisfied with the recommendations made by the PSC (Parliamentary Select Committee for electoral reforms), then Bersih can hold its demonstration anywhere," he said.

Dr Chua pointed out that alternative venues like Stadium Merdeka and Stadium Bukit Jalil have been offered up by the authorities to the group, indicating the government's willingness to allow the rally to proceed.

"Are you going to say that because you hold it in Stadium Bukit Jalil, the effect would not be there? And only holding it in Dataran Merdeka would have an effect? That it holds some special magical power for Bersih?" he asked.

Dataran Merdeka, said Dr Chua, is a historic square and should not be used for such events, much like in certain landmarks in countries like the United Kingdom.

Bersih plans to hold its third rally for free and fair elections at Dataran Merdeka this Saturday despite orders from the authorities to move the event elsewhere.

It has claimed that the alternative venues were offered up too late and it would not be possible to inform the venue change to its supporters.

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