

Police say Bersih arrests imminent
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 2 — Police are poised to arrest Bersih participants who attacked their fellow demonstrators during last Saturday's rally, a senior official confirmed today.

Bukit Aman Crime Investigation Department director Datuk Mohd Bakri Zinin said arrests would be made based on pictures taken and recordings made available to the police.

He said police would release the pictures of those who attacked the authorities and member of the public, as well as caused damage to property during the rally.

"We have their pictures and we will release them to the media and the public soon to track them down," Bakri was quoted by Bernama as saying.

But Bakri refused to comment when asked by The Malaysian Insider whether action would also be taken against police officers who had allegedly attacked rally participants.

"This is a private line... you cannot call me on this line," he said before bringing the phone conversation to an end.

Chaos reigned on the streets of Kuala Lumpur for over four hours after 3pm last Saturday when police fired tear gas and water cannons and chased protesters down the streets of the capital to disperse what had initially started out as a peaceful protest calling for free and fair elections.

The melee was believed to have begun after overzealous protesters either mistakenly or deliberately breached the three layers of barricades — razor-wire fences, plastic blockades and metal gates — that were placed around Dataran Merdeka.

According to Bersih 3.0 and opposition party leaders, the barriers were breached after the rally was called to a close and declared a success but it is believed that the message was lost among the sheer thousands who turned up for the event, the third to be held since 2007.

The ensuing violence has pitted both Bersih supporters and the government in a blame game against one another.

Scores of civilians, policemen and even journalists were hurt when the protest took an ugly twist with demonstrators refusing to back down and even raining missiles upon their armed pursuers.

The cat-and-mouse game went on for hours and many protesters were seen allegedly being roughed up by police personnel but in his immediate response, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein had insisted that the force had acted with restraint.

International media organisations have already predicted that the force used by the police may have a negative backlash on the Najib administration, adding that polls may have to be delayed past its expected June date if the government is keen on recapturing lost votes.

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