

Suhakam can be independent panel on Bersih violence, says Pua
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By Ida Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, May 4 — The government should ask the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) to conduct an inquiry into allegations of police brutality at last Saturday's Bersih rally, Tony Pua said today.

The DAP publicity secretary said the government's proposal to set up a separate independent panel was unnecessary.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday said that "credible, experienced and respectable" individuals will make up the independent panel, adding that it was likely to be formed by next week.

"Why is there a need for the prime minister to set up a new "independent" committee which will require a fresh set up and selection of new panel members?" the Petaling Jaya Utara MP said today.

He pointed out that Suhakam is empowered to "advise the government and/or relevant authorities of complaints against them and to recommend appropriate measures to be taken", under Section 4(2) of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act.

Pua also said that the Suhakam commissioners are appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the recommendation of the prime minister.

"Is it because the Cabinet is worried that Suhakam findings will be detrimental to both the police force and the government?" he asked, and wondered if the government is trying to form a panel that "will be more sympathetic towards the government's cause."

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"The Cabinet should immediately appoint Suhakam as the independent investigation panel so that Malaysians can get to the bottom of this controversy as soon as possible," said Pua.

Pua also commented on last Saturday's rally for electoral reforms, saying that, "the root cause of all the problems is the rejection by DBKL on the use of Dataran Merdeka and not Bersih's rejection on the use of Stadium Merdeka."

Yesterday, the prime minister seemed to blame Bersih 3.0 organisers for last Saturday's violence, saying if the group had accepted the government's Stadium Merdeka offer, "these things would not have happened at all".

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 violence has resulted in finger-pointing by all parties involved, even as police investigations are being carried out.

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