

Pakatan gained nothing from Bersih 3.0, says PKR Youth
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By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

PETALING JAYA, May 6 — PKR Youth today denied claims that Bersih 3.0 was hijacked by Pakatan Rakyat (PR), insisting the pact did not gain any political mileage from last weekend's rally.

PKR Youth chief Shamsul Iskandar Md Akin said such allegations were a part of Umno's "propaganda strategy" to tarnish Bersih's image and undermine its platform, after the April 28 rally garnered tens of thousands of Malaysian support.

"What is the political mileage from Bersih 3.0? We have to face with consequences; it is bad publicity for Pakatan Rakyat.

"Bersih's demands are the same as Pakatan Rakyat's demands — we want a change, a free and fair election process," he told reporters here.

Shamsul also said he welcomed the government's announcement of a special panel to investigate allegations of violence during the Bersih rally, but insisted that diverse stakeholders be included in the panel.

"We welcome the formation of an independent panel, but it will be pointless if it is made up of people who are not credible.

"Its members must include Bersih, Pakatan Rakyat lawmakers and reporters as well."

Shamsul's remarks today were in response to the rise of an anti-PR movement online demanding Bersih co-chairman Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan stop the polls watchdog from being "hijacked" by the opposition pact.

"Dear Ambiga" (www.dearambiga.com), a website that professes to be pro-Bersih, has accused the federal opposition of co-opting the electoral reform group's cause for their own "political interests and benefit."

The one-page website appeared days after the April 28 rally, which saw tens of thousands of protesters taking to the streets to demand for free and fair elections. The rally ended in clashes between demonstrators and police officers, resulting in scores injured and damage to public property.

The title of the website's solitary page reads "Time to stop Pakatan Rakyat hijacking our movement" and features a picture of Ambiga together with Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim wearing Bersih 3.0 t-shirts.

The website features an automated email function that allows visitors to "email Datuk Ambiga if you want the hijacking to stop."

Ambiga has repeatedly denied claims that PR was hijacking Bersih to gain political support. She has also been critical of opposition lawmakers over their roles in the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on electoral reform.

PKR's Anwar and Azmin Ali have been heavily criticised over their alleged roles in last weekend's rally, as well as being accused of instigating the breach of the court-ordered barrier at Dataran Merdeka, after which police began firing tear gas and water cannons at demonstrators.

Foreign media reports of Bersih's rally have painted the Malaysian authorities in a negative light for their purportedly heavy-handed tactics at dispersing protesters.

Bersih 3.0, which had begun peacefully, ended just as Bersih 2.0 did last July 9, with riot police seen chasing citizens down the streets of the capital amid the chaos of tear gas, jets of chemical-laced water and warning bells from police trucks.

The electoral reforms movement remains critical of efforts to improve the voting system by the administration, including the recently-concluded PSC, saying that these were inadequate to guarantee free and fair elections in the country.

It also wants the government to delay the next general election until all of its demanded reforms are implemented.

Bersih's eight demands are a clean electoral roll, reforming postal voting, the use of indelible ink, a minimum campaign period of 21 days, free access to the media, strengthening public institutions, stopping corruption and ending dirty politics.

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