

DAP suggests Hanif independent panel will be biased
The Malaysian Insider
May 10 , 2012
By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, May 10 — The DAP said today Putrajaya's independent panel probe on Bersih 3.0 violence would return biased findings, following the appointment of former Inspector-General of Police Tun Mohammad Hanif Omar as its head.

DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng pointed out that Hanif had already made clear his opposition to Bersih and his former position as IGP would serve as a conflict of interest when the panel probes allegations of police brutality.

As such, he said it was a "forgone conclusion" that the panel would absolve all police personnel from blame over the violent incidents during Bersih 3.0 last month.

"For these reasons, the prime minister should try to salvage or restore some credibility and public confidence... by replacing Hanif with an independent, apolitical, unbiased and an upright person of integrity," Lim said in a statement.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein announced the names of the six-man panel tasked to investigate allegations of police violence against Bersih 3.0 protesters on April 28.

Apart from Hanif, the other panel members include former Chief Judge of Borneo Tan Sri Steve Shim, Sinar Harian managing director Datuk Hussamuddin Yaacub, Media Chinese International legal adviser Liew Peng Chuan, Petronas corporate affairs senior general manager Datuk Medan Abdullah and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia psychology Professor Dr Ruzmi Ismail.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had pledged last week that "credible, experienced and respectable" individuals would form the independent panel to probe the violence during Bersih 3.0.

Najib added that he along with the entire government and members of the public are keeping a close eye on investigations into the allegations that journalists, both local and foreign, had been roughed up during the rally for free and fair elections.

But Najib has come under fire for his administration's selection of Hanif to head the panel, even after the latter had agreed with the prime minister's claim that Bersih 3.0 was an attempt to overthrow the government and even claimed that communist sympathisers were involved in the event.

According to Lim today, the ex-IGP had also stated that the tactics of using provocateurs to cause the demonstrators to clash with police and to bring children along in the hope they would get injured were tactics learnt from past pro-communist demonstrations.

"How can Najib consider Hanif as a 'credible, experienced and respectable' individual that ensures its investigation panel is independent and unbiased when Hanif has adopted such a prejudiced and partisan stand against the Bersih 3.0 rally as an attempt to overthrow the government?" the Penang chief minister asked.

He also questioned if Hanif's appointment meant that the investigation would merely turn out to be a "whitewash" of police brutality on peaceful demonstrators, a cover-up of the

sufferings by those allegedly beaten up or a pretext to justify Najib's claim that Bersih 3.0 was a coup attempt by the opposition.

Chaos reigned on the streets of Kuala Lumpur for over four hours after 3pm on April 28 when police fired tear gas and water cannons and chased protesters down the streets to disperse what had initially begun as a peaceful protest calling for free and fair elections.

The Bar Council has said that its observers found that police brutality at the rally was "magnified" compared to already chaotic scenes during a similar gathering for free and fair elections last July 9.

Six local pressmen and about 12 photographers and journalists from the foreign media were reportedly assaulted during the fracas on April 28 after the police sprayed water cannons and tear gas to disperse Bersih 3.0 protesters.

Both local and foreign media groups have condemned the hard-handed tactics used on the media, whom they pointed out were merely doing their job.

Police had begun firing the tear gas and water cannons after some demonstrators breached the barricade in front of Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and rushed into Dataran Merdeka, which the court had barred the public from entering that particular weekend.

They fired as far as the DBKL premises, which are across Jalan Parlimen, and the move broke up the crowd who fled helter-skelter but police chased them down at Jalan Tun Perak and Jalan Raja Laut.

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