

Bar Council wants 'engagement' over Bersih 3.0, may hold lawyers' march
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 — The Bar Council announced today plans to “engage” with the authorities, including the prime minister, home minister and Inspector-General of Police (IGP), over its findings on Bersih 3.0 and added that it has not discounted holding public march.

Its president, Lim Chee Wee, said that “at the minimum”, council leaders hope to hold discussions with the three parties and the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) over the Malaysian Bar’s resolution today condemning alleged acts of police aggression against Bersih 3.0 protesters.

“Engagement is important. We believe in engagement. To be fair to the IGP, we have had various engagements (with him). But on what has happened in KL... this has gone too far and we hope that he (IGP) will keep an open mind.

“At the minimum, we are seeking across-the-table (discussions),” he told reporters after the council’s extraordinary general meeting (EGM) this evening.

“I am not discounting that possibility,” he added, when asked if the council would organise a lawyers’ walk over its Bersih 3.0 findings. “A member of the Bar suggested that (the walk) and the council has to make a decision on that.”

The Malaysian Bar had earlier approved a resolution condemning the police for using “excessive” and “indiscriminate” force to disperse Bersih 3.0 protesters on April 28, despite objections raised by a minority group of lawyers during today’s EGM.

The resolution, passed by way of voting this evening, also demands apologies from the home minister and the IGP to the public and members of the media over the conduct of the police during the rally.

According to Lim, only 16 of the 1,270 Malaysian Bar members in attendance today had opposed the resolution, which contained findings of alleged police brutality against protesters and members of the media.

A total of 939 votes were recorded in support of the resolution. There are some 14,000 members in the Malaysian Bar.

Lim also expressed “disappointment” that, to date, not one police personnel has been investigated for using excessive force during the April 28 rally for free and fair elections whereas several court charges have already been slapped against protesters,

“The IGP has to answer. We intend to ask him,” he said.

Today’s EGM was called to discuss the slew of issues surrounding the rally for free and fair elections, which saw chaos on the streets of the capital when police fired tear gas and chemical-laced water to disperse protesters.

According to a notice issued on the Malaysian Bar's official website on May 4, the EGM was called to discuss a motion "in relation to the events of and surrounding the public rally on 28 April 2012 organised by Bersih 3.0, and matters in connection therewith".

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak recently labelled the demonstration as an attempt by certain quarters to overthrow the elected Barisan Nasional (BN) government, as he hardened his administration's position towards the electoral reform movement.

Lim previously said that the Bar's monitoring team had found more instances of police brutality compared to last year's July 9 Bersih event.

He also said the authorities failed to take heed of criticism and recommendations outlined by Suhakam with regards to police conduct during Bersih's first two rallies, and lamented on how "little has changed."

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