

Bersih to launch fundraising drive

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By Sheith Khidhir Bin Abu Bakar

Electoral reform watchdog is targeting RM500,000 but worries about mounting costs in facing pending court and police cases.

PETALING JAYA: Electoral watchdog Bersih 2.0 will launch a fundraising campaign to collect RM500,000 which it needs to continue its operations for the next one year or so.

The campaign will run from this month to September.

Speaking at a media conference at its office at 8 Avenue here today, Bersih 2.0 chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah said the group currently has RM520,000 in its accounts but the money will run out within seven months.

“Last year, we spent about RM545,000 on the Bersih 5 rally and convoy, more than RM50,000 in legal costs and about RM30,000 on the campaign to encourage people to vote while our overhead is RM35,000 a month.

“Donations raised from Bersih 5 amounted to RM300,000, and we still have money left over from the RM2.6 million we collected from Bersih 4,” she said.

Maria said upcoming legal costs were worrisome.

“We have spent RM50,000 and have seven or eight cases pending which are estimated to cost above RM100,000 – and those do not include the 100 over police cases against Bersih,” she added.

There are 120 police investigations against Bersih 2.0 beginning from the Bersih convoy last year.

Although Bersih 2.0 lawyers work for free, money was still needed to cover court and disbursement costs.

Asked what Bersih 2.0 planned to do if it hit the collection target of RM500,000 by September but the money ran out afterward, Maria said there would have to be new fundraising campaigns.

“We will have to continue raising funds. We haven’t gotten free and fair elections yet, so we have to keep trying.”

Global Bersih steering committee member Ivy Josiah, who was also present at the media conference, said a fundraising committee had been set up and it would continue its efforts as and when needed after meeting the RM500,000 target.

She said a “red flag” would be triggered when an NGO only had enough money to operate for seven months.

“We urge all Malaysians who feel strongly about free and fair elections to contribute. The work doesn’t end in 2017 or 2018 because institutional reform is a very long journey.”

Ivy has had 30 years of experience raising funds for the Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO).

The Bersih 2.0 fundraising committee comprises Maria, Ivy, committee volunteer Shobana Thiagarajah, Bersih 2.0 regional coordinator Jay Jay Dennis and Bersih 2.0 deputy chairman Shahrul Aman Mohd Saari.

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