

Bersih: I meant Shah Alam stadium, says Najib
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Premier Najib Abdul Razak said when he offered electoral reform coalition Bersih 2.0 to use a stadium for their rally instead of marching on the streets, he really had Shah Alam Melawati stadium in Selangor in mind.

"But the offer was rejected and they instead insisted to march on the streets and wanted the Stadium Merdeka," explained the PM three weeks after the Bersih rally on July 9 that had met with heavy-handed police action.

"What I had in mind was the Shah Alam Stadium. Since they wanted to gather 100,000 people and it is far away from the city (Kuala Lumpur), so they will be no loss of life or damage to property," Najib told the 500-strong audience at the KL Hilton Sentral.

He was giving the closing address at the 5th Annual Malaysian Student Leaders Summit at the prestigious hotel in Kuala Lumpur today.

The PM claimed that his offer of the stadium was proof that there was no attempt at suppressing dissent.

"It is a fallacy to say that we don't allow. We allow room for dissent," Najib claimed.

He added that while his government might not mimic the kind of democracy as practised in the US or Europe, there is open discourse in Malaysia.

During the final days before July 9, Bersih organisers agreed to Najib's offer to gather at a stadium but but were refused a permit for Stadium Merdeka.

Overseas voting 'constitutional problem'

Najib also waved off critics of his administration's every move without attempting to understand, maintaining during the question and answer session, that his administration is very committed to electoral reforms.

"I am committed to electoral reforms, and we will undertake electoral reforms," said the PM without going into details of what he plans to do about the much-criticised Malaysian electoral system.

Asked when Malaysians students and workers overseas will get a chance to vote, Najib dismissed is as a "constitutional problem" that will require constitutional amendments.

He said that as of now there is no constitutional provisions for overseas Malaysians who are not of the armed forces or police to vote, and in order to make it possible, they will have to amend the constitution.

"If there is a need to allow students studying abroad to vote, we will look into it and discuss with the Election Commission," said Najib.

The PM then said that would be a problem as the BN now did not have two-thirds majority, saying they would have to engage with the opposition in order to do so.