

London riots justify Bersih clampdown, says Najib
Malaysiakini.com
August 12, 2011

The riots in London justify the government's actions in stopping Bersih 2.0 from marching on July 9, said Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Speaking after a BN supreme council meeting in Kuala Lumpur today, Najib said the actions taken were precisely to avoid such chaos.

"The riots which have broken out in the UK are very serious and were absolutely not anticipated by the authorities there.

"Therefore, what the government decided in relation to Bersih 2.0's plan to march was to avoid any incident that could lead to a riot like the burning of shops or attacks on individuals," he said.

Najib added that there are no guarantees that any street demonstration would remain peaceful as there could be bad hats who join in and cause trouble.

Meanwhile, Bersih 2.0 in a press statement today rejected parallels drawn between the July 9 rally and the UK riots.

"Despite police use of force, the various video footage and personal accounts prove without a doubt that Malaysians are capable of gathering peacefully to demand a more democratic country in line with our rights as enshrined in the federal constitution," the statement says.

Yesterday, deputy inspector-general of police Khalid Abu Bakar used the chaos in UK to defend the crackdown on Bersih 2.0, suggesting that it was necessary to avoid the type of "tragic scenes" being seen in riot-torn Britain.

Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein has also expressed similar sentiments, stating that the events in London should not be taken for granted.

The premier also expressed "regret" that Bersih 2.0 had "turned down" the government's offer for the rally be held in a stadium.

"We regret that the offer for the rally be held in a stadium in Shah Alam was not accepted by the organisers. We never retracted that offer," he said.

Najib had said last month that when he offered a stadium, he had meant the Melawati Stadium in Shah Alam, not Stadium Merdeka.

The Pakatan Rakyat Selangor government had earlier offered the Melawati Stadium to Bersih 2.0.

'BN too committed to clean elections'

"We thank the police for ensuring that the July 9 incident did not lead to damage to property and loss of life," Najib said.

He added that electoral reform was not the sole domain of any party, and that the BN too was "committed to fair and clean elections".

"We will negotiate with the Election Commission, and other parties can do so too, so the EC can come up with a method to guarantee that elections cannot be disputed.

"This perception that BN does not defend the principle of free and fair elections can be absolutely refuted.

"We will negotiate with the EC so that all allegations are dealt with convincingly," he said.

However, Najib refused to comment on whether he would call for an emergency parliamentary sitting to debate the issue of permanent residents registered as voters, which the Pakatan MPs have demanded.

"We will make a statement when the time comes," he said.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/172833>