

'Bersihkan Malaysia' flies flag at Perth CHOGM
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As the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) opened in Perth on Oct 28, a group of Malaysians joined a peaceful rally in the central business district.

Bersihkan Malaysia (Perth) was among 20 groups at the event organised by the CHOGM Action Network (CAN), which seized the opportunity to draw international attention to many issues affecting the Commonwealth.

About 70 Malaysians participated in this rally to highlight the need for electoral reforms at home, led by Bersih 2.0 steering committee member Wong Chin Huat.

The rally participants gathered at Forrest Place in Murray Street Mall and marched through the city at 11am before staging a sit-in at William Street.

CAN spokesperson Alex Bainbridge led the speeches by leaders of communities and participating groups, including Wong.

"I'm here to voice the concerns of Malaysians to the prime minister (Najib Abdul Razak, left) in the presence of (our) Commonwealth brothers and sisters, to get (them) to support our cause (even as we support) support their causes," Wong said.

He highlighted two major appeals by Bersihkan Malaysia (Perth)- to implement essential electoral reforms before the 13th general election and to urge Najib to invite the Commonwealth to send an election observer team to Malaysia.

Malaysians sang the national anthem and folk song Rasa Sayang throughout the rally. This attracted other Malaysians who were passing by as tourists are who are residents in Perth.

Jordon, a committee member of Bersihkan Malaysia (Perth), said the group was formed following a rally that supported the Bersih 2.0 march in Kuala Lumpur on July 9.

With limited resources, he said, it is struggling to reach out to Malaysians in Perth to become involved in issues at home.

He expressed hope that those at the CHOGM rally have been able to make their point to the Malaysian delegation.

Doing their part

A Malaysian tourist, who only wanted to be identified as Faizan, made a pointed observation about police response to the protestors in Perth.

"I could see a clear difference. I joined the Bersih rally in Kuala Lumpur and I was hit by tear gas in front of the (Tung Shin) hospital," he said.

"Over here, we were allowed to (express ourselves) freely and without any fear."

Malaysian student Chrystle was enthusiastic about participation: "It's an obligation for a citizen to be at least conscious of the development or situation of politics as (this) is inherently associated with our daily life.

“To stand up and join the rally is merely to put my concern into action for my beloved country. I’ve done my part as a Malaysian.

“Of course, thing will not change (immediately) just because we marched on the (streets). But we (need to) keep up the momentum to push for change, for a better future, a better Malaysia.”

Another participant, Ivan, said he believes in doing what he can for his country of origin.

“I’m not a politician. I can’t stand in front of the media to say how bad they are or how to stop corruption, so I’m just doing my small part to tell the world about it.”

Wong said Malaysians should overcome the fear of political repercussion and be brave enough to participate in rallies.

“There should be no reason (why we should be afraid. We are supposed to be independent. If everyone comes forward, (Malaysia) would be a much better place.”

CONNIE PANG, a student, marched with Bersihkan Malaysia (Perth) at the rally.

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