

Hundreds join Sabah rally to save native land

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Hundreds of NGO members took part in a rally dubbed '123 Bangkit' in Kota Kinabalu this morning to protect native customary rights (NCR) land.

The rally, organised by a group dubbed Bela Tanah Rakyat Sabah (Tabah), began at a field in Anjung Selera, Likas, before the participants marched to Wisma Innoprise, a building 200 metres away that houses the office of Sabah Chief Minister Musa Aman.

A memorandum urging the state government to return NCR lands back to the people and their original owners was supposed to be submitted to Musa's office.

However, Tabah treasurer Mohd Firdaus Mohd Noor expressed disappointment that their representatives were denied entry into the building. They could only gather with the other participants under a tree in front of the building.

"Initially, we wanted to hand the memorandum to the chief minister. We had written him a letter beforehand, asking him to accept the letter. Unfortunately the chief minister did not appear, just his representative.

"His representative came to the tree... So we decided to cancel the handing over of the memorandum. We will choose another date to call a bigger rally," Mohd Firdaus said when contacted by Malaysiakini today.

The group says NCR land is a critical issue in Sabah, with scores of complaints including grabbing, trespassing and fraud.

The participants dispersed peacefully around 10.30am, said Mohd Firdaus, who is also Sabah PAS Youth media official.

'Musa is a coward'

Last night, PAS central committee member Mazlan Aliman, who also leads Anak, the NGO opposing the listing of Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd, and who planned to attend the rally, was barred from entering Sabah.

Mazlan, who is head of PAS' land and territories bureau, was supposed to show his solidarity with the rally participants this morning.

He was detained by Sabah immigration officials for more than two hours before being deported back to Peninsular Malaysia, without any explanation given.

In a statement today, the frustrated PAS leader called Musa (left) a "coward and arrogant".

Mazlan said: "I repeatedly questioned why was I detained and denied entry into Sabah, what wrong I have done and what crime have I committed.

"They gave me no reason, except that the instruction came from the state authority! I was under tight control and in hunger. Not only was I not given food, not even a glass of water!"

He lodged a police report on his detention at Kota Kinabalu airport police beat.

This was not the first time Mazlan has been denied entry into East Malaysia. He faced the same treatment in Sarawak two years ago.

'Musa and Taib live in fear'

These actions by both Sabah and Sarawak state governments, he said, showed that Musa and Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud were in fear because the severity of the NCR land issue has escalated.

Mazlan also blasted Musa for assigning a low-ranking official to receive the Tabah memorandum "by the roadside" this morning.

"Where are Musa and the other senior ministers? The people have been humiliated by the BN government. What is wrong in allowing the NGO representatives and villagers into the lobby of the state government building at least?"

"This is how Musa treats the people. Where is slogan, 'people first, performance now'?" Mazlan added in the statement.

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