

## **Thousands of Kedahans gather to back Bersih 3.0**

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PAS supporters came in full force to support the launch of Bersih 3.0 by Pakatan leaders in Alor Setar last night, where the event unfolded peacefully without any disruption.

Earlier, a group of about 50 people wearing black T-shirts with the word 'Perkasa' written in red disrupted a PKR event along Jalan Putra, where a vendor was nearly hit on the head by a protester.

NONEThe Bersih 3.0 supporters sat on the muddy football field and listened attentively for more than three hours to a series of speeches by well-known personalities like national laureate A Samad Said, Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim and PAS veep Mahfuz Omar.

Malaysiakini estimates the crowd swelled to more than 5,000 at the height of the event.

Bersih steering committee member Toh Kin Woon started the ball rolling by going through the origins of Bersih, while Samad read out his poems on the movement and of potential radioactive hazards by Australian-based Lynas plant in Gebeng, Pahang.

NONEThe energetic Samad (left) explained why he supported the call for electoral reform, saying he was already in his seventies but "I do not want to die in vain".

Samad's speech veered into politics when he spoke about the Malays feeling threatened if Umno no longer ruled the country.

"The government leaders, police, army and civil servants are all Malays. Why do the Malays still feel threatened?"

"If the Malays feel they are in danger, then they should seek for change," he added.

The crowd was moved and impressed with his speech as many, especially youths, approached him after the event and took turns to snap photos with the author-cum-poet.

Samad, a co-chairperson of Bersih 2.0, played a key role in the July 9 rally last year which saw about 50,000 people marching in Kuala Lumpur to back the NGOs coalition's eight demands for electoral reform.

Last Tuesday, another Bersih 2.0 co-chairperson S Ambiga announced that Bersih 3.0 will be held in Dataran Merdeka on April 28, with the theme duduk bantah (sit-down protest).

The Bersih 3.0 announcement came following the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform's "incomplete" audit of the electoral roll as it has not addressed issues related to postal voting, election offences, and measures to end dirty politics.

The NGOs coalition has issued three key demands: the Election Commission must resign; the electoral roll must be cleaned up before the general election can be held; and international observers be allowed to monitor the polls.

NONEMahfuz, who is Pokok Sena MP, was in his usual element, storming on the stage while explaining to the already converted crowd of why PAS supported Bersih 3.0.

He pointed out the dangers of a dubious electoral roll, hitting out at the ruling coalition's alleged policy of issuing identity cards and thus voting rights to countless migrants.

“Umno often talks about the Malays being threatened. We are threatened by these foreigners who are issued identity cards so they can vote.

“I will not allow these people to decide the fate of this country and our future,” he thundered.

'Lembu' and 'Rosmah' tickle the crowd

Meanwhile, Anwar arrived at about 10pm after attending a state PKR fundraising dinner at the Keat Hwa Secondary School hall which was attended by about 1,000 people.

In his speech, the Pakatan leader regurgitated issues like the National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) controversy which has led to the resignation of Women, Family and Community Development Minister Sharizat Abdul Jalil.

NONEAnwar also teased Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak for his “cowardice” in rejecting a debate with him, pointing out that most of the world leaders are always involved in debates.

But it was the mere mention of the word “lembu” (as in cattle breeding by the NFC) and “Rosmah” (Najib’s spouse) which drew the heartiest laughter from the mostly Malay crowd.

Despite the leadership problems afflicting the Kedah government and its embattled Menteri Besar Azizan Abdul Razak, Anwar endorsed him as a leader worthy of support.

“He may not be perfect but he is not corrupted and does not steal the rakyat’s money,” Anwar added.

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