

**Umno member: Don't let BN pawn our country**  
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**By Nigel Aw**

A pre-Bersih 3.0 rally last night raised eyebrows when Tamrin Abdul Ghafar, son of former deputy prime minister Abdul Ghafar Baba, made his debut by urging the crowd to throw their support behind the April 28 sit-in protest to demand clean and fair elections.

NONE Tamrin (right) took to the stage and declared: "I have a clarification to make, I am still an Umno member."

This invited laughter and some jeers from nearly 2,000 people who filled the muddy field in Kampung Baru, Kuala Lumpur.

"But today, I have decided to come down to the ground with you because I can no longer bear to see the electoral system being manipulated for the sake of maintaining power," he said.

Tamrin claimed that it was his first time speaking on stage since 1986. He was last spotted in 2010 with Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim at a ceramah, but he was then a guest and made no speech.

Last night's rally, marking the 10-day countdown to the massive protest expected at Dataran Merdeka on April 28, saw several participants wearing the trademark yellow Bersih T-shirt.

They sat on makeshift mats on wet grass to listen to speeches by some 31 activists, student leaders and politicians.

Tamrin contrasted premier Najib Abdul Razak's administration with that of his father.

He said Abdul Razak had willingly surrendered power after assuming absolute authority as head of the National Operations Council following the May 13, 1969 riots.

"But today, I am saddened to see that our country can simply be sold to foreigners for the sake of winning (the general election)," he said.

Pointing to media reports that tens of thousands of foreigners were being granted instant citizenship in exchange for votes, Tamrin related that he too, had come across a Pakistani taxi driver, who was in fact a Malaysian citizen.

NONE He also conveyed a message to the crowd from Umno veteran and Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, popularly known as Ku Li.

"Ku Li has clearly said that he supports what Bersih is doing and he is also supportive of calls by Anwar and allies for PTPTN to be abolished in favour of free education. This is the best investment for our country," he said.

'Don't let them steal the election'

Another surprise guest was former information minister Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir who urged the audience not to allow BN to "steal the election".

"I was an Umno member for 56 years and it was a party owned by the members, the leaders were clean. But as time passed, it appeared that it had become their (selected few) fathers' party.

NONE "They stole this and stole that, I could no longer tolerate it and quit as a minister at the peak of my career," he said.

"After I quit, I remained silent but the stealing became worse. Millions were no longer enough, its now in the billions, in the end I could no longer take it and quit the party."

He said elections cannot be called until the government provides fair access to the media and stops abusing government machinery, the police and the army to give it an upper hand in the polls.

"Don't forget that 48 percent of people voted for Pakatan Rakyat in 2008 without media access, half of the country was being blacked out... this is not a democracy."

Abdul Kadir, who claimed that he had secretly supported the two Bersih rallies in 2007 and 2011, pledged to show up on April 28. He was then handed a Bersih T-shirt which he put on.

Others who spoke at the rally included PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu, PKR deputy presidents Nurul Izzah Anwar and Tian Chua, PSM secretary-general S Arulchelvan, former Perak menteri besar Mohd Nizar Jamaluddin, Bersih steering committee members Maria Chin Abdullah and Hishammuddin Rais, Himpunan Hijau steering committee member Clement Chin and Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia chief Safwan Anang.

NONE Also gracing the event was Anne Ooi who shot to fame during the Bersih rally last July when she was photographed standing in front a phalanx of Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) officers holding a yellow flower and drenched in acid- laced water.

The retired teacher, accompanied by Kota Raja state assemblyperson Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud, cheekily told the crowd to give Najib "a headache".

"Are afraid of the police? Are you afraid of Umno? Are you afraid of Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL)?" she asked, to which the crowd roared "No!"

Dataran Merdeka, the main venue for Bersih 3.0 rally which is expected to be simultaneously staged in more than 50 cities locally and globally, is under the jurisdiction of DBKL.

'Rally for justice, no more deaths'

Azhar Mohd Kassim, the nephew of Baharuddin Ahmad who had died amid the chaos of the police crackdown in the Bersih 2.0 rally, appealed to the crowd to fulfill his uncle's last wish.

"When my uncle left for the protest, he said he was doing it for justice... I hope that you can join the rally to uphold justice," he said.

However, Azhar said he hoped the rally this time would not face a similar police crackdown and result in injuries and deaths.

NONE As Bersih co-chairperson A Samad Said, better known as Pak Samad took the stage, marking the final lap of the rally, the audience huddled closer to listen to the 77-year-old national laureate.

"We have received hurtful answers from the Election Commission that constantly favour those in power... it is time for everyone to take responsibility if our democracy is tainted," he said.

"April 28 will be an important day to voice our dissatisfaction with what has happened in the last 54 years."

Pak Samad also commended the student activists who have taken a two-week head start to camp at Dataran Merdeka in spite of harassment from DBKL.

"If they (authorities) insist on evicting you from Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square), then it is Dataran Penjajah (Colonialists Square); therefore anyone who prevents our right to gather at Dataran Merdeka is a colonialist," he said.

Later, some 300 people visited the students, who entered the fifth day of camping there.

Police and DBKL officers have remained mum so far on whether Bersih will be allowed to hold its rally at Dataran Merdeka.

However, the organisers say they will go ahead with the rally with or without the authorities' consent.

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