

**7,000 including Penang CM rally at Esplanade**  
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**By Susan Loone**

At least 7,000 people gathered at the Esplanade in George Town this afternoon and Aliran president Francis Loh was the first to address them.

Loh expressed surprise over the number of people who turned up.

NONEHe said he thought only 200 to 300 would turn out, and was encouraged by the number of people committed to clean and fair elections.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and Pakatan leaders were also present.

There were no disturbances whatsoever throughout the rally.

Around 2.20pm, everybody was asked to sit down, including the hantu (phantoms) present, and the crowd laughed.

The crowd then began chanting, Bersih! Cuci! and Bantah! three times each.

The crowd then got excited and shouted "sit down" at those who were standing. And every time a group sat on the ground, the rest of the crowd broke into applause and cheered.  
'Crowd not really from Penang'

Later at about 2.30pm, the crowd swelled to about 7,000; bottles of water were distributed, litter bags were provided, and participants did not leave the field filthy after the protest.

A regular ice-cream vendor when asked, said cheerfully: "Business is good. I wish there are events like this at least once a week."

A special branch police officer whom Malaysiakini spoke to complained that the crowd was "not really from Penang".

"They came from Sungai Petani and elsewhere, I saw them walking from the pier," he said.

Other than chanting Bersih songs and the national anthem, the event included the reading of national laureate A Samad Said's poem by Aliran's Mustafa K Annuar.

NONEMembers of women's group Women's Crisis Centre were seen participating in the affair, with anti-Lynas supporters who wore green and carried posters and banners promoting the cause against radioactive risks.

A group of Malaysians from Los Angeles, USA, were also on the field carrying posters with slogans 'allow overseas voting' led by engineer Caterine Chow, a first-time voter.

"If I can make it, I would surely come back to vote but we need to be prepared. We hope the authorities can make it possible to vote from where we are," she added.

Rumours of trouble

Meanwhile, the crowd grew ecstatic as Lim addressed them.

He praised the crowd for their courage in turning up at the venue despite “rumours of trouble” created by certain quarters.

Lim joked: “There might have been some who are anti-Bersih, but when they saw the 10,000 strong crowd they must have left.”

He told those who opposed Lynas and a dirty election “you know what to do”, referring to the upcoming 13th general election.

“Do you want your life to be dirty?” he asked, and the crowd responded with a resounding “No”.

“What I say is not important, but the fact that you are here at the sit-in, braving the rain and the fear of trouble is testament to why we need Bersih,” he added.

Then he prodded the crowd to shout “Bersih so loud that even Rosmah (Mansor) in Putrajaya can hear you”.

The crowd, including Lim, dispersed at about 3pm, when rain started to pour.

However, several protesters continued to stay on the field conducting their on activities.

Malaysiakini later saw a smiling Penang Perkasa Youth chief Risuan Azuddin on his motorcycle with several bikers near the Esplanade.



