

## **100,000 marching on the streets says it all**

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**By Charles Santiago**

MP SPEAKS Yesterday's Bersih 3.0 rally, calling for changes to the country's electoral system, was a milestone in Malaysia's political history. At least 100,000 people marched on the streets to send a clear message to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak - they want reforms to the polling system.

No, they did not mean the sham of setting up committees only to dismiss crucial issues, which have contributed to the ruling coalition's grip on power.

While Najib passed a slew of reforms on the electoral system, his actions did not address critical issues such as cleaning up the electoral roll.

NONEBut with 100,000 Malaysians demanding serious, durable reforms, Najib has no choice but to heed their concerns.

This means he must postpone the next general election, widely expected as early as June, until the eight-point demand of election watchdog, Bersih, is met. Anything short of this will not be good enough for Malaysians.

It was unfortunate that the rally ended in a chaotic manner, with protesters and media workers arrested. As I write this, close to 400 people are reported to have been detained, with no access to lawyers. I also note that some policemen and protesters were hurt in scuffles.

While its yet to be ascertained if the protesters who defied the order of rally organisers to disperse were planted, what cannot be denied is the excessive use of tear gas and water cannon against the people.

NONEThe police had also manhandled protesters and beaten up press photographers for taking pictures of violent arrests.

In sharp contrast, northern Penang had a peaceful rally as there were no presence of the police or razor wires. Malaysians living in 80 different cities across the world also rallied peacefully, with no untoward incidents.

While the police had treated Malaysians like criminals by erecting barricades around Dataran Merdeka, maybe the head of the government can still do the right thing.

And Najib should start by working on the demands of the people who painted the city yellow.

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