

## **Gov't feared long-term occupation of Dataran**

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**By Nigel Aw**

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has said that the government banned protesters from using Dataran Merdeka for the Bersih 3.0 rally on Saturday because there were secret plans for a long-term occupation of the public square.

"Aside from it being a historical and iconic site in the context of the country's independence, we dispute the motives of the organisers because there were quarters who would use it for political purposes.

"They had plans for a continued takeover of Dataran Merdeka," he told a press conference after the monthly Umno supreme council meeting in Kuala Lumpur late last night.

Such civil disobedience have become a common sight in recent years, such as the occupation of Wall Street in United States and Tahrir Square in Egypt, which led to tense stand-off with authorities and in some instances, violent clashes.

NONETherefore, he said the police had done well by acting against the protesters for attempting to breach Dataran Merdeka, which was declared off-limits by the court last week.

He also defended the use of water cannon and tear gas by police, adding that doctors familiar with the protest had assured him that the chemicals used would not adversely affect one's health.

Polls delayed? 'Wait and see'

Najib said that while not all protesters were violent, the actions of a few extremists have marred the image of the Bersih 3.0 rally, its participants, and to some extent the country's international reputation.

"When there is mob psychology, it will affect normal people. Those who would not resort to violence too will become wild," he said.

However, the premier said the government had deployed 130 medical officers including 30 doctors throughout the protest site to aid everyone, regardless of whether they were police or protesters, on April 28.

Asked if the government will decide to delay calling early polls, which is widely speculated to be held in June, in light of the massive protest demanding clean and fair elections, Najib replied: "Wait and see".

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