

Bersih 3.0: All good at Dataran Bandaraya, JB
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By Joel Yap

Across the causeway, I started making my way to Johor Baru alone on the eve of Duduk Bantah Bersih 3.0, on foot, with some help from a printed image from Google Maps.

My journey from Singapore began at around 5 o'clock. Why so early?

This is because I was unsure of how the situation would be like; people were disallowed from entering Kuala Lumpur on July 9 last year, so...

Why walk? From JB Sentral, all the way to Dataran Bandaraya whilst looking at a little map, because I had never been to the place before. With on my back only a pouch, DSLR body and two simple lenses, there I went, walking in excitement.

By the time I reached my destination it was already dark, at least I had the pleasure to enjoy an amazing view of the evening sky on the way.

Dataran Bandaraya was quiet and empty except for a few local hawkers selling dinner and supper just outside (I assume they do their businesses there every night).

Was not interested in their food, I went exploring the area since I had already travelled this far.

Sat down in a 24-hour mamak shop nearby for some dinner and rest, partly because Lee Chong Wei was playing (and he won, by the way) in a badminton match which was aired live on Astro.

After that I tried entering a hotel just behind Dataran Bandaraya.

Managed to wash up and rested on one of their sofas for the night. Please do not ask me how I bathed!

In the end I was hinted to leave by a staff at about 4 o'clock in the morning, I then washed up again before going back to the mamak shop for a drink.

Then it was all walking back and forth between the shop and the rally venue for the next few hours- until my uncle, cousin and friends reached Johor Baru. They picked me up to grab some lunch.

Under the scorching heat, we joined with some fellow participants who were at a junction between Jalan Sungai Chat and Jalan Skudai, where we then waited as more gathered.

Holding up homemade banners and punching fists into the air, we cheered together and many who drove along the main road honked in support.

Everyone was getting warmed up for what was about to take place. The numbers grew, it was time to march to Dataran Bandaraya; and we did so enthusiastically, chanting "Bersih!"

It was when we reached Dataran Bandaraya that I realised we were only probably one-third of the whole crowd, many had already gathered at the rally point.

I am incapable of describing with words how it felt to be among so many fellow Malaysians physically present to demand for clean and fair elections.

The atmosphere was so delightful that I had long forgotten how exhausted I was from all the walking as well as lack of sleep.

The gathering was rather peaceful, thanks to the cooperation between our organisers and police personnel. I am proud and confident to say this: There was no act of violence or provocation.

Well, some sort of football tournament was ongoing at the same venue since morning though. And I must say, seeing a rock band perform at a football or any other sporting event was definitely something new for me.

I was amused by how the volume on their public announcement system seemed to increase as our cheering and chanting got louder. Certainly spoilers.

Never mind not supporting Bersih, never mind refusing to tune down, heck, never mind singing and screaming to a bunch of football players or else into the air; but I could not tolerate it when they carried on with their music as we sang 'Negaraku'.

Any sensible person ought to know to respect a national anthem, no less his or her own country's. Shame on those who disrespected 'Negaraku'. Nevertheless I decided not to take pictures of the band members, for their own sake.

Duduk Bantah carried on with the sounds of our supporting cheers and disturbing live music in the air. Personally I did not mind the music too much as I could hear the speeches.

On a side note, if I were organising such a rally to protest against dirty elections, I would brief my leaders and colleagues to be careful with their words.

Not to shout out anything anti-government lest anybody claim the rally to be hijacked by the opposition.

This is just my humble opinion: Organisers and participants need to be clear on what they are rallying for.

Ideally, Bersih, just as the Election Commission, is supposed to be apolitical. Anyway I was happy we had a peaceful crowd that made a peaceful rally.

Rubbish bags were distributed at the end of the JB Bersih 3.0 rally. By the way, the live music was still on, the lead singer must have had a very powerful voice; that could make him a potential politician or protest organiser one day.

Well, I was more impressed to see both Bersih organisers and supporters alike, picking up trash while taking pictures together before leaving the venue. To clean up the place as we demanded for the EC to clean up the electoral roll, it was that symbolic to me.

So we collected rubbish into the black plastic bags provided before adjourning from the area; okay, to be honest I did not pick up much as I was busy taking pictures.

The day ended with some coconut juice before my uncle, cousin and friends headed back to Kluang.

I then went to wait for a bus to take me to somewhere near the Johor Baru customs complex; having been told that there were such buses. However, as a pleasant surprise, I bumped into the event organisers.

Another round of coconut juice! It was such an honour to be seated at the same table with these people - a group of committed Malaysians doing this for my generation and my children's generation.

I was encouraged and blessed. And they were so kind to give me a ride to where I needed to go to.

April 28, 2012. The day I stood up straight and sang the National Anthem with utmost pride. The day I sat down in protest against unfair elections.

And I was not alone. To the seniors whom I share the same nationality with but were born decades earlier, thank you for coming out to duduk bantah.

My generation has a lot to learn from yours. It was a reminder and encouragement that age and race are not a hindrance towards fighting for a better Malaysia.

What a day!

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