

**Growing pains towards a better future**  
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As a student of international politics, it was with a measure of pride that I observed the unfolding of Bersih 3.0 yesterday.

We are far from the finished article in terms of a transparent, functional democracy but the steps being taken towards it encourages me as to the future of our nation.

The running street battles and chemical-laced water cannons seemed to be a thing of the past and up until some hooligans (sadly, every nation in the world is saddled with them) thought it would be heroic to break through police barriers, the social media and internet were abuzz with remarks by rally-goers of the restraint shown by the police compared to previous rallies.

To blame the subsequent instances of police high-handedness on agent provocateurs is simplistic.

Similarly, it is wrong for the police to blame the organisers for the actions of a few unruly idiots (I stress again, the world is full of them and they are a burden we must bear).

Where we apportion blame now is clear. The actions of opposition politicians who whipped up anti-government sentiment which in turn led to the actions of the idiots was completely unnecessary and must bear the brunt of the blame from the Malaysian public.

They must bear the blame for causing ridicule to the country. They must bear the blame for causing damage to vehicles and property caused by a mob for the first time since 1969.

I am one of those who fervently subscribe to the aims put forward by Bersih and what they stand for. However, it is despicable of the Opposition to hijack the rally for their own political ends.

Being non-partisan I wish for a better standard of democracy in Malaysia too. But turning a peaceful rally into a political one serves not only to raise heckles but deviates from the original purpose of the rally.

We know the system is imperfect and similarly too the authorities. But to lay all the blame at the door of the government is to absolve mischief-mongering opposition politicians of any blame.

Fiery rhetoric only whips up the sentiments of idiots. And those idiots in turn caused what was a previously peaceful rally to turn violent.

However, the main thing I was delighted with is that Bersih 3.0 was further evidence of the growing political awareness of both the government and the people of Malaysia.

It would seem like the lessons of the past general election and previous Bersih rallies are being learnt, albeit slowly.

The large majority of people who made their way into town were peaceful Malaysians united in their need to advance the democratic standards of the country.

This contributed to a festive atmosphere being reported all over where crowds gathered.

Similarly, a large number of police personnel were equally restrained and their actions were commended all over the internet. This is a clear improvement on previous rallies.

There were no more roadblocks for days prior on major arteries leading into the city.

There were no more chemical-laced water cannons. Nor were there any mass arrest of opposition leaders as in previous years.

Sure, the tear gas did come out, there were instances of violence and there was also regrettable injuries on both sides. Aside from those that actively sought to unleash a rowdy and unruly mob on Kuala Lumpur's streets, any further finger pointing would be fruitless and undesirable.

Rather, I think we should be celebrating the improvements made in the implementation of Malaysia's freedom of assembly laws.

I am also rejoicing that the Najib Razak government seems to be more disposed to accepting that dissenting voices too need to be given their space.

It takes a lot for people to admit they are wrong and the gradual changes being made to laws and their implementation is not only an admission of previous mistakes but also a move to redress those wrongs.

To expect anything more than a gradual improvement is politically naïve. These are the so-called growing pains in the nation building effort.

I am filled with pride that we are going through this transitional period for it means a better future is ahead for our beloved Malaysia. Hidup Rakyat! Hidup Malaysia!

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