

**Forget the blame game, focus on Bersih 4.0**  
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Everyone who attended the Bersih 3.0 rally last Saturday was there for national interests. The police will have their version of what is in their national interest, PKR leaders Anwar Ibrahim and Azmin Ali will have their versions, and so does everyone else who have demonstrated under the banner of Bersih.

Unfortunately there are no independent arbitrators to define what is 'national interest' is at the moment. That was the main reason why Bersih managed to galvanise such huge support in a simple cry for "free and fair" elections.

We are where we are now because at some historical moment long ago a cunning prime minister called Dr Mahathir Mohamad went on a wholesale campaign to plant his "yes" men (literally) to all the top positions in the public institutions.

The rest is history; all the heads of government departments since then have just been marching to orders from Mahathir.

Back to Bersih 3.0, pointing fingers at particular individuals who breached the barricades last Saturday or the police who went on a rampage at this point will only generate more hatred amongst one another and intensify the tension.

We are stuck now because we do not have an independent arbitrator on this matter. Everyone had hoped that Najib could act responsibly on our behalf, for the sake of national interest to sack the EC top duo, and sincerely go through the process of meeting the demands of Bersih.

Unfortunately the strong arm tactics that were employed by the police and the FRU during the Bersih 3.0 rally showed that Najib is willing to defend PutraJaya till the last drop of Umno's blood.

The ball is now in the Bersih steering committee's court on what to do next. This is uncharted territory in Malaysia's political history. It is not that important to rate Bersih a success or a failure or to establish who did what, where and when.

We all know how the police and the government inquiries will end up. There is no independent arbitrator on this matter neither. Even though Suhakam will come out with their conclusion, no action will be taken against the police. However action will undoubtedly be taken against the demonstrators.

Therefore we may as well move on. What's next is more crucial. Do we want to continue with Bersih 4.0 to agitate for change? If we do, how far are we willing to go? Does it have to end up like Tahrir Square in Egypt?

What have we learned from Bersih 3.0?

The Umno regime has successfully divided Bersih into two camps: those who support the barricade incident and those who do not. At the press conference by PKR, the leaders indicated that there were barricades open at other locations at Dataran Merdeka before the barricades were breached where Anwar and Azmin were located, but that does not matter because the strategy of discrediting PKR is considered a success by Umno.

It overshadowed the police brutality and in fact it justified it. In the eyes of the kampung folks who watched it on the mainstream media, that might translate to more votes for BN in the next general election.

The Bersih steering committee will do a post mortem to replot its strategies. I have faith that the Bersih steering committee will consider all avenues before we get to the Tahrir Square scenario.

This is where the power of the new media can help change the course of history. I would like to invite all Malaysians to brainstorm the kind of possible non-violent actions that we can do to avoid fatalities and have a peaceful change.

Give suggestions as if you are in the Bersih steering committee meeting. I would like to start with my two cents worth of suggestions.

1. Never hold any more Bersih rallies in a stadium. If Bersih 3.0 had been held at Stadium Merdeka as the authorities had suggested, there would have been a massive stampede if the police fire tear gas and water cannons.

2. Play ball at the BN's court with their set of rules instead. Have Bersih 4.0 in all the crucial rural constituencies. Hold day-long field events, ie. workshops, dikir barat, wayang kulit, community theatre or information field day at these crucial constituencies. A simultaneous day of 'Bersih 4.0 Balik Kampung day' at all these rural areas.

3. Can we approach the Agong to do something about election fraud? I am not a constitutional law expert therefore I am not sure.

4. If Najib's administration still refuses to budge before the next GE, then it is to the national interest for Bersih to make a stand on which side they would choose in the election. Bersih can make it clear that it is in the national interest that we seek a change in government for this process of democratisation to happen.

If the opposition does get to form the next government, Bersih will have to make sure that all the top administrative positions in the public institutions be independent and able to spearhead the nation to a full-fledged democracy.

Salam Bersih!

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