

Bersihans: Stay focused and united

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An open letter to all who participated in Bersih 3.0

Dear fellow Bersihans,

I am writing to urge all of us to stay focused and united.

Please do not get sidetracked from the true reasons why we came out on 28/4, and that is, to demand for a reform of our country's electoral system and to clean up the electoral rolls before the next general election.

The enemy of these demands is doing their level best to sidetrack us with a myriad of non-issues.

They are also working to divide us while painting to the rest of our countrymen that we are just a bunch of hooligans.

Stay focused on the demands of Bersih 3.0 and stay united because we are making a difference.

Foolish they are not. It is most unfortunate that the main event in KL took an ugly turn when most of us had hoped for a chance for a peaceful rally.

I do not wish to join in the blame game for there are enough players on the field and investigations are ongoing.

When the full extent of the violence became clearer, my first thought was how foolish can this government be?

Haven't they learnt from Bersih 2.0 in July last year that it is totally counter-productive to their own cause to use violence against their own citizenry?

Well, I am realising that they are not foolish and yes, they have learnt from the last Bersih 2.0.

I am beginning to believe that they orchestrated much of what happened before, on and after 28/4.

The build-up to 28/4 was like a cat and mouse game, different signals were sent.

The police had no problem with the rallies across the country and the home minister said that Bersih 3.0 was not a security threat as there was no traction for the movement.

He even gave the assurance that the presence of police would be only to assist the protesters and maintain order.

But the bad guy this time was DBKL and city councils in participating towns and cities.

We need to get permission to use public spaces.

So, the public image of the police looked good this time round compared to Bersih 2.0.

They are seen as professional and reasonable.

Zero sincerity

But the same cannot be said of the organisers of the protest.

Isn't it reasonable that they get permission from the owner (for that is how they view the Datuk Bandars) before we use his property?

And if the owner said "No", shouldn't we just accept it especially if he offered us an alternative?

The Merdeka Stadium and Bukit Jalil Stadium were offered just three days before the event.

As Ambiga asked rhetorically, "Couldn't they have offered it much earlier when Bersih 3.0 was first announced on April 4?" Was there any sincerity in their proposal?

I believe there was none.

It was all just a public relation exercise to paint the organisers of Bersih 3.0 in a negative light as unreasonable and stubborn people because just three days before the rally, the home minister who has been saying that the rally did not pose a security threat, did a U-turn and said, "We have already compromised and offered alternative venues to them.

"But if they choose to be stubborn, it will be up to the police to take the necessary action," he said.

So, in the eyes of the general public, Ambiga and her team are just stubborn and unreasonable.

That was their goal all along, I believe.

It's not about the truth. In the aftermath of the violence on 28/4, they used all their media machinery to highlight the violence and the headlines screamed the following day - "What a mess!!!", "Najib: Bersih broke promise to gather peacefully", etc.

Photo after photo of violent "protesters" were splashed on the front pages.

NGO after NGO and angry "traders" given press coverage to air their anger at Ambiga and the opposition.

The government cared not about the likes of you and I who have access to the alternative media and social networks because they know that the majority still believes what they and their propaganda machineries churns out. What an orchestration!

Beware of smokescreens

All these - the shifting of blame, focus on the violence, the negative portrayal of Bersih leaders and opposition politicians, the ridiculous crowd figures given, the "negative" impact of the rally on business, are just smokescreens.

They are meant to divert the people's attention away from the real issues which are the eight demands of Bersih 3.0 and the additional three.

These are the reasons why the hundreds of thousands of Malaysians from 11 cities here and over 80 cities around the world came out for.

Our demands are being deliberately drowned out by the lies, distortion and deception.

The sacrifice of the patriotic people who came out is being rubbished.

Same old divide-and-rule tactic

But most insidious of all is the attempt to divide us, the Bersihans.

A common accusation, almost like a mantra, is that Bersih has been hijacked by the opposition who only wants to seek their personal selfish advancement.

Those of us who like to think of ourselves as non-partisan may feel aggrieved that many opposition leaders seems to take the lead on the day of the rally itself.

My question is this - What is wrong with opposition politicians supporting Bersih when we have been saying that all Malaysians who want to see clean and fair elections should support us?

It is obvious why the opposition politicians should feel strongly about this issue.

They are the ones who stand to lose most in unfair and dirty elections.

It is like saying non-smokers should not campaign against smoking because they have personal selfish interests.

And to the issue of whether they should lead, I say, many of them are natural leaders and as long as they stick to the agenda of Bersih and come out as Malaysians, why shouldn't they lead?

This is just my humble opinion.

Another tactic they are using to divide us is to highlight dissenting voices like that of DAP vice chairman Tunku Abdul Aziz Tunku Ibrahim.

In my view, it is not only natural but also healthy that there are dissenting voices in any democratic institution.

But we do need to know when to speak up and when not to.

The unity of the movement is more important than our own opinions, especially in the public arena.

Just know that our foes are eager to exacerbate the cracks.

Coming to the bit of news that precipitate this open letter is the report in *The Malaysian Insider* titled "Anti-Pakatan dissent spreads online to fight 'hijack' of Bersih", that an anti-PR "movement" demanding Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan stop the polls watchdog from being "hijacked" by the opposition pact.

It has a one-page website where those who agree with its demand can send an e-mail directly to Ambiga.

Personally, I have my doubts as to whether these are truly Bersih supporters as claimed.

If they are, then why are they not anti the people who are committing election frauds, corrupt and playing dirty politics? I just find their initiative "unusual".

But again, the disappointed and angry Bersihans among us may be seduced into supporting this "movement".

But be warned, it can only divide us and weaken our resolve and numbers.

We should not have anything to do with such schemes.

No doubt there will be more non-issues thrown out to confuse the public and us but let us stay alert.

Stays focused and keep on hammering home our demands for a free, fair and clean election, where we have influence.

Let us stay united in our struggle until we see all our demands met.

Hidup Bersih!

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