

Dataran Merdeka hit by post-Bersih jitters?

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Two weeks after the mammoth Bersih 3.0 rally that drew over 100,000 protestors, the authorities today cordoned off Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur again, with police officials conspicuously present.

While the closure is said to be for a cycling event tomorrow, the curious presence of the police in the square lent an unusually sombre atmosphere to the popular tourist site.

Barricades were placed at the two entrances of the Dataran on Jalan Raja and the back alley of Sultan Abdul Samad's building, with four to five police officers guarding every corner.

Also present were two truckloads of about 30 Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) enforcement officials.

A DBKL enforcement official, who declined to be named, explained that the square was being closed off to make way for workers to install a canopy, and that the closure will be lifted by tomorrow evening.

"We need to set up a canopy because the youth and sport minister is coming tomorrow," she said.

Bernama reports that the sixth stage of the 1Malaysia Cycling Tour 2012 from Ipoh, Perak will end up at the square tomorrow at 10am.

Police mum over presence

A senior police official, when approached by *Malaysiakini*, declined to say why the police were called in for a DBKL exercise, saying they were merely doing their job.

When pressed the nature of the "job", he declined to answer. Asked again if it was related to Bersih, he said, "Maybe."

Meanwhile Suardi Mohd Said, a security guard at Sultan Abdul Samad building, said that the police had told him they were there to prevent a demonstration from taking place in the iconic square.

Earlier at 2pm, members of the grassroots assembly movement Occupy Dataran staged a picket outside the Bar Council building about 50m from the Dataran to condemn police brutality during the Bersih 3.0 rally.

The protestors displayed placards that slammed police violence and asked oncoming traffic to honk in support.

When met by *Malaysiakini* later, an Occupy Dataran member who wished to be known as Lee Slam Shady said a group of its members were camping out at the Dataran this morning.

"We were evicted when they came in at around noon and locked down the whole place," he said.

Lee said the group will try to enter Dataran again later tonight, or hold their weekly assembly programme outside the Bar Council building.

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