

## **Najib slams Bersih 3.0 in London, despite protests**

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak in his meeting with Malaysians in the United Kingdom last night raised unruly behaviour by Bersih 3.0 protesters during their huge rally in the national capital Kuala Lumpur on April 28.

Najib's speech at the start of 'An evening with the Prime Minister' at the iconic Arena 02 in the UK capital of London was met with shouts of Bersih, bersih!

National news agency Bernama reported Najib as saying that there would be those who voted for and against in any democracy, but at the end of the day, what mattered most was the choice of the people.

"The people of Malaysia will have that choice. We have proven it. You don't need to have street demonstrations in Malaysia because, if you have them, inevitably there will be trouble, there will be clashes," Najib was quoted as saying, in an apparent reference to last month's Bersih 3.0 demonstration in Kuala Lumpur.

The prime minister addressed some 1,000 Malaysians in London, who had braved the city's heavy traffic to be present.

Najib said the people had the right to support the government or the opposition, but "you must operate within the rules of the law".

"If you discard the rules of law, there would be anarchy in the country. We cannot afford anarchy. We can allow dissent, I can appreciate difference of opinions and views but I will not respect it if you break the law in the country. That is the only safeguard that we have for the future of Malaysians," he said.

The prime minister pointed out that it had been shown that 100,000 people could gather in a stadium, and do so peacefully, making an apparent reference to the mass gathering held at the

Bukit Jalil National Stadium last Friday in conjunction with Umno's 66th anniversary celebration.

"That is the right way and, if Bersih wants to meet, we can give them the same stadium, and we will ensure peace and security. Nobody will be harmed and that is the right way for us as a nation that is mature. We believe in democracy, but democracy with responsibility."

Proud of law-abiding Malaysians

Najib's speech was delivered in a very informal setting, and was received with great enthusiasm by the Malaysians who had thronged the concert hall, some bringing along their children, Bernama added.

There were a number of boisterous people in the audience, which prompted the prime minister to remark that it is "very un-Malaysian and very rude to heckle", but the rest of the audience listened with rapt attention to his speech.

najib event at london O2 dome 100512 "I am proud of all Malaysians who are law-abiding and respectful of others and that is why you must speak up. You must speak up for those who abuse their positions. (If) you are a minority, don't impose your views on the majority," he said.

He said he believed that the way ahead was to behave sensibly, abide by the law and, when the time comes, there would be the chance to decide as Malaysians.

Najib, who informed the audience of the many significant changes that the government had made in terms of the economy, education and several security laws, emphasised that the government wanted to be a government that represented the feelings of the people of Malaysia.

Earlier, eyewitnesses present told Malaysiakini that they were subject to stringent security checks, with metal scanners and body searches included, besides their photographs being taken and personal details recorded before they could enter the venue.

Asked why these measures were taken, the crowd was told they may receive "ang pow" from

Najib if they put down their particulars.

Some of the attendees also claimed that besides the strong security presence, members of the police Special Branch also took pictures of the crowd.

As Najib began his speech even as the protesters shouted "Bersih, bersih, bersih," the premier began to look a little flustered and pleaded with the crowd to "please stop".

He promised them that they could speak to him later.

An eyewitness saw a protester who refused to leave being manhandled and forcibly thrown out of the hall by security personnel.

"The protester is said to have sprained his ankle. Special Branch officers and Najib's bodyguards also approached a number of protesters and escorted them out.

'Like entering Umno's den'

Another protester, Hiu Woong-Sin, described entering the O2 Arena was like entering into an Umno's den as the attendees were mainly government-sponsored students, Malaysian Student Department officials and embassy officials brought in from all over the UK.

"Only a handful of protesters were there. When Najib started, we began to chant 'Bersih', and asking pertinent questions. There was a protester who was manhandled by the security officers and his ankle was injured.

"He did not make a police report, and we were thrown out and escorted by the Special Branch officers to the underground station about 200 metres away, so we didn't have a chat with Najib as he had promised," said the eyewitness.

The protester said they were informed by those who stayed on that Najib made a comment about justifying the police violent actions against the Bersih 3.0 protesters.

“We aim to launch our own version in video with all the video and photos collected in the last few hours by tomorrow (UK time) evening).

Social Care Foundation chairperson Robert Phang told Malaysiakini that there were six or seven protesters who shouted at Najib, but other than that the event was held without any untoward incidents.

After the speech, according the news agency, Najib and his wife Rosmah Mansor mingled with the crowd that swarmed the couple, with some people posing for pictures and others wanting to shake hands with the prime minister, who obliged.

Also present were Malaysia's High Commissioner to the UK Zakaria Sulong, who organised the event, and his wife Hazizah Ahmad.

Najib and his troupe arrived in London yesterday for a two-day working visit to the United Kingdom.

The prime minister has been invited by the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, for a reception in conjunction with the conferment of the Royal Charter Award to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.