

**'Bersih 3.0 didn't put off investors, but ...'**

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**By Hazlan Zakaria & S Pathmawathy**

Contradicting the claims of BN leaders that the Bersih 3.0 rally had frightened off foreign investors, the International Trade and Industry Ministry conceded that the street protest did not hamper the government's bid to attract investments.

"It did not have any impact because of our strong economic fundamentals," deputy minister Mukhriz Mahathir (right) said during Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat today.

However, he maintained that "the illegal Bersih 3.0 rally didn't help".

If the rally had been prolonged or if such protests are repeated, there may be fears over security and safety that could deter investors, he explained.

Mukhriz also disclosed that the country received RM17.9 billion in 846 approved projects between January and April, compared with RM56.1 billion for the whole of 2011.

In addition, Malaysia had risen to the 14th rank from 16th in a Switzerland Institute of Management Study that lists the most competitive economies in the world.

He was responding to Shamsul Anuar Nasarah (BN-Lenggong), on the impact of the Bersih 3.0 rally and the country's performance in attracting foreign investments.

**'Consequences of rally in Mecca'**

On a related matter, Deputy Foreign Minister A Kohilan Pillay said the Bersih 3.0 rally in Mecca and Medina could have had serious consequences.

Kohilan said the Saudi Arabian Embassy sent the ministry a diplomatic note, advising Malaysians intending to perform the ummrah or haj to mind the laws of the nation.

PAS Youth chief Nasrudin Hasan Tantawi had led the gathering in Mecca on April 28, which "tainted the purity" of the holy destination for Muslims worldwide, Kohilan (left) added.

He was responding to Juslie Ajirol (BN-Libaran) who asked about action taken by diplomatic missions "in dealing with Malaysians staying overseas who often twist the facts and give wrong perceptions of their own country".

Khalid Samad (PAS-Shah Alam) countered Kohilan's criticism, stressing that the ummrah itself is an assembly that was once oppressed.

Kohilan replied that that repeating the "crime" could result in the Saudi government banning

Muslim Malaysians from fulfilling their religious obligation.

"Take what happened to Iran ... the Saudi government banned Iranians from performing the haj for three years," he said.

He was referring to the aftermath of a demonstration by Shia pilgrims from Iran in Mecca in 1987, which led to a violent clash with the Saudi Arabian security forces.

According to reports, more than 400 were killed in the fracas that escalated the rift between the two nations, and eventually led to the ban being imposed.

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