

## **Najib declares Merdeka rally a huge success**

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**By Koh Jun Lin**

Hailing last night's 'Janji Ditepati' rally at Bukit Jalil Stadium as a success, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak described the crowd as representing the majority, unlike the previous night's.

Bt Jalil Merdeka NajibNajib was obviously referring to the 'Janji Demokrasi' rally at Dataran Merdeka on Aug 30, which saw some 10,000 yellow-clad protestors defy a police ruling that the rally as illegal.

"Tonight, it is the majority of the people who are nation-loving citizens.

"The ones the night before were not the majority, (but) tonight the majority has gathered," Najib said, adding that the crowd before him was more energetic and inspirational.

He was addressing his welcoming speech at a stadium filled to capacity of just over 87,000.

Outside, at least 5,000 were present at any one given time, either enjoying performances under the shelter of three separate tents, patronising some of the food stalls set up, or watching the celebrations within the stadium projected on several large TV screens.

According to the Information Ministry's press kit, another 8,500 were also taking part in the performances within the stadium.

Chartered buses VS on own initiative

Bername estimated the crowd at 150,000, however, Malaysiakini's attempts to contact the Information Ministry's Corporate Communications Department for official figures proved futile.

The 'Janji Demokrasi' protest , aimed at 'reminding' the government of its 'unfulfilled promises' for clean and fair elections, had been broomed off by government leaders, such as Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein who said that the participants had tried and failed to create chaos.

There was also a separate rally at Jalan Sultan just hours before 'Janji Demokrasi's' calling for the preservation of the historic site. However, the government had not openly objected to this rally.

Bt Jalil MerdekaUnlike the two protests, many revellers at the official Merdeka celebrations were brought in by chartered buses, hundreds of which were seen parked outside the stadium.

LRT management had also been giving away free return tickets to those wishing to attend.

SMSes also went out inviting the public to the celebrations, as well as to the parades earlier that morning.

In addition, there was a lucky draw, featuring prizes such as cars, tickets for trips aboard, and tablet computers, all from corporate sponsors.

The seating plans for the event showed allocations only for government-linked corporations, NGOs and BN-friendly political parties.

However, Information Ministry officials had maintained that seats for the public had been reserved within the stadium, although no figure was provided when asked.

A small portion of the revellers within the stadium were spotted in plainclothes alongside large groups in uniform.

National pride acts as magnet

However, it was no certain whether they were part of the public attendees, or also specially invited guests.

When met, four revellers interviewed by Malaysiakini outside the stadium expressed little or no interest in the lucky draw, but instead cited national pride as the reason for their presence.

Bt Jalil Merdeka - Keow Min Sports Association member Chin Peng Foo "We are all here to celebrate, not to win at the lucky draw," said Chin Peng Foo, a member of the Keow Min Sports Association.

Indeed, emcees were still addressing the almost-deserted stadium and trying to give away some of the prizes even as the last train was about to depart the area at 1am.

All the interviewees were also members of some association invited to the event.

On the 'Janji Ditepati' theme prior to the start of the rally, the four, still on the way to the stadium, felt that it was appropriate and disagreed with the opposition's complaints that it was politicised.

"Not at all, it is (a) universal (value) to deliver promises," said 28-year old Azhar Abdul Razak, a volunteer with the National Anti-Drug Agency's Skwad 1Malaysia.

Najib and Muhyiddin at a rally to celebrate country's 55th Independence Day in Bukit Jalil Stadium  
Returning to Najib's speech, he also said that the Government Transformation Program was a success, and its second phase, dubbed GTP II, would be launched early next year.

He then proceeded to trumpet Malaysia's economic successes as well as law reforms, which, he said, were done in the spirit of democracy.

He wound up his speech by rallying revellers to defend the nation's independence from enemies and the opposition alike.

"Ladies and gentlemen, remember that independence only knocks once for any nation. Let us close ranks and defend our independence with a solid front, at every corner and at any time.

"Even more so when enemies and the opposition are trying to bring chaos into the situation," he said.

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