

Najib, ensure peaceful rally to prove 'best democracy'

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By Lim Kit Siang

COMMENT On Thursday evening, while on the way to Pontian to launch the DAP Tanjong Piai GE13 operations centre, I tweeted the following:

"Pakatan to give full co-operation. Call on all Malaysians to make 112 historic day. Police aim for 'zero casualties' at weekend rally - Malaysiakini"

This was after I read the report that the police's corporate communication chief, Ramli Mohamed Yoosuf, had declared at a media briefing at Bukit Aman that despite casualties which happened during previous rallies and protests, the police aimed to have 'zero casualties' at today's rally.

Ramli stressed that security is the police's utmost priority, that the police are serious about the security and safety of everyone, and that this matter was also discussed at the meeting between the inspector-general of police (IGP) and the organisers a few days ago.

At the meeting concerned last Tuesday, the IGP, Ismail Omar, told Pakatan Rakyat leaders that he wants the Jan 12 rally to be "a historic moment where the police can learn from their past weaknesses" and gave a guarantee that the police will merely take on a facilitatory role during the planned rally at Stadium Merdeka.

It therefore came as a shock and surprise that later in the evening, there were reports that the police did an 'about-turn' when the Kuala Lumpur police chief Mohamed Salleh issued a press release, wanting the People's Uprising Rally to be held in Bukit Jalil stadium instead of in Stadium Merdeka.

This was clearly the result of unacceptable political interference with the police by the political leadership in view of the demands by Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein, and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Ahmad Maslan, who is also Umno information chief that the People's Uprising Rally should be held in Bukit Jalil stadium, and not Stadium Merdeka.

I am glad that good sense has finally prevailed and that the rally today will be held at Stadium Merdeka as had been agreed with the police authorities.

The Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak should ensure that there is no political interference, whether by the home minister, the Umno information chief or other political operatives to prevent the IGP from ensuring that the People's Uprising Rally today is a peaceful and successful one from the standpoint of human rights and democracy.

'A historic moment' where the police will begin to regain public confidence in its efficiency,

independence and professionalism to uphold the law and promote democracy, not as an agent of the ruling politicians to defend the existing regime.

Trouble Najib's death knell

The latest public opinion poll on the prime minister's approval rating conducted by Merdeka Centre in the last two weeks of last year and made public on Thursday revealed that Najib's popularity rating dropped two points to 63 percent from last October.

This is Najib's lowest popularity rating for the whole of last year, which fluctuated from 69 percent in February and April to 65 percent in May, 64 percent in June and 65 percent in October.

Najib's popularity rating last year, dropped to the lowest level of 65 percent in May and 64 percent in June after the public relations disaster in the police rampage and government mishandling of the Bersih 3.0 rally at Dataran Merdeka on April 28 when salt, water bottles and even handphones were regarded as "weapons of mass destruction" to topple the BN government.

Similarly in 2011, Najib's popularity rating plunged to the lowest level for that year (i.e. 59 percent), after the police's excessive use of force, violence and brutality during the Bersih 2.0 rally on July 9, 2011.

If the peaceful and democratic People's Uprising Rally at Stadium Merdeka today joins the Bersih 2.0 and Bersih 3.0 rallies as the third major 'black mark' of the Najib administration, Najib should expect his popularity rating to plunge to the lowest depth in his four-year premiership - even lower than the lowly 45 percent popularity rating with which he started as prime minister in April 2009.

In such circumstances, no one believes that Najib could recover from such a fatal political blow to save him and BN in the impending 13th general election which should be held in March.

Let Najib prove his sincerity in wanting Malaysia to begin the journey to be the 'world's best democracy' by ensuring the peaceful and historic holding of 112 People's Uprising Rally at Stadium Merdeka today.

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