

## **Crowd salutes jailed student activist with rally**

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**By Susan Loone**

A group of 50 people from various backgrounds held a peaceful rally, undisturbed, at the Bukit Tengah roundabout last night to express their admiration and support for Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia president Safwan Anang.

NONE Safwan, 24, (left) refused to post bail when arrested on May 28, and is currently incarcerated at the Sungai Buluh prison.

However, his Twitter account at 11.40pm yesterday stated that Safwan, whose family visited him, may agree to be bailed after all, today.

The 45-minute event, which began at 8.30pm, was supposed to have been a sit-down protest, but as the venue was found to be unsuitable, a stand-up rally was held instead, with participants holding up placards and banners to condemn Safwan's arrest.

Several local politicians, including Bukit Mertajam MP Steven Sim and Machang Bubuk assemblyperson Lee Khai Loon who were present, addressed the crowd.

NONE Representatives from DAP, PKR, PAS, and Parti Sosialis Malaysia were also there along with the organiser, Penang Suaram, student activists and members of Mothers for Bersih (clean and fair elections).

Police cars appeared to observe the event, but did not take any action although Central Seberang Prai district OCPD Asst Comm Azman Abd Lah had labelled the event as "illegal".

Peaceful start, peaceful end

The emcee for the event, Khairul Ishak, told reporters later that the police put an end to the event at about 9.30pm, by asking them to disperse.

NONE "We were told that the event was causing a bit of a traffic jam, so we halted it as we started well and wanted to end the night properly, too," said the assistant to Padang Lalang assemblyperson Chong Eng.

The event, which started and ended with the singing of 'Negaraku', attracted many onlookers and slowed down traffic along the circle.

Vehicles driving by honked in support, while several special branch officers stood at the sides, recording the event with their digital cameras and smartphones.

NONE Curious onlookers stopped their motorbikes across the streets and watched the event from a distance.

The rally group was impressed with Safwan, with many praising him for refusing to post bail and choosing to remain in prison as he felt that he did not commit any crime and wanted to show that he had been serious in his struggle for justice.

Many said, "We will no longer fear, as Safwan had no fear. We are all Safwan Anang".

Barbs for PM from participant

Sim said Safwan, a young student activist, represented the voice of Malaysian youths in the country.

"Safwan was willing to show what BN did wrong in 55 years of their rule. But now, speaking the truth is seditious," noted Sim.

He criticised Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak for having committed two "atrocities" after BN retained power the federal level following the May 5 general election.

NONE "The first atrocity is planning to impose the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on the people, it would be a burden especially for those who are already trapped in the middle income group," he said.

"The second atrocity is using the law to punish the people politically, by using the Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA) as a facade to silence dissent, when the majority (52 percent) of the rakyat support Pakatan Rakyat," he added.

"The Sedition Act is (also) being used, but that is an archaic law left behind by the British.

How can we have confidence in Najib's administration?" he asked.

On May 28, Safwan was arrested and charged with sedition along with PKR vice-president Tian Chua, PAS member Tamrin Ghafar, Anything But Umno (ABU) coordinator Haris Ibrahim and social activist Hishamuddin Rais, who turned himself in to the police and was charged under the same Act.

The trio, not including Safwan, had also been arrested on May 23 under the Sedition Act, charged with uttering seditious words at a May 13 forum, but later released when police failed to obtain a remand order to keep them behind bars.

Safwan joined the ranks of another student activist, Adam Adli Abdul Halim, who was also arrested and charged on May 23 under the Sedition Act 1948, but is free on bail now.

In a similar development, six Pakatan leaders -organisers of the nationwide Blackout 505 rallies to condemn electoral fraud in the just-concluded GE13 - in Penang, Perak, Pahang, Negri Sembilan and Johor were charged under the PAA with not notifying the police 10 days in advance of the event as required by Section 9 (1) of the law.

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