

**After coup claim, Turun rally now linked to LGBT
MalaysiaKini.com
Dec 31, 2013**

The anti-price hike rally is now being linked to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transexual (LGBT) movement, after more than a week of onslaughts where authorities accused the protesters of wanting to overthrow the government.

Human rights group Suaram coordinator Ahmad Syukri Ab Razab (right), in a statement today, said his mobile phone number had been hijacked to disseminate text messages stating that the rally tonight was to stand for the rights of gay people.

Ahmad Syukri said since 7.45am on Dec 30, he had been bombarded with calls about the text message which he denied ever sending.

Later, he said one of the callers forwarded the message allegedly sent by him which read: "4 our right as a free men n women, 2 love as gay ppl - show our support to AI&PR (Anwar Ibrahim & Pakatan Rakyat) by attending #RPDM31D@Dataran Merdeka - Sexuality Merdeka".

Seksualiti Merdeka is an LGBT movement outlawed by the government while #RPDM31D is a twitter campaign for tonight's protest which stands for Rakyat Pilih Dataran Merdeka 31 Disember (The rakyat choose Dataran Merdeka on Dec 31).

"I believe this SMS was circulated by irresponsible parties using advanced technology by stealing my private number to disseminate false information to the public," he said.

He said the text message was aimed at discouraging protest turnout tonight as LGBT issues remain sensitive among Muslim Malaysians who are largely conservative.

Ahmad Syukri said he had lodged a police report about the matter at 10am today at the Pantai police station.

"I believe this started when my number was published on social media and news portals as a hotline for participants at the protest tonight if they are arrested by police," he said.

However, Ahmad Syukri said the incident will not deter tonight's rally where people

are expected to turn out in force to demand that the government address the spiralling cost of living.

"For Suaram, we will continue with our duty tonight to help the public who need legal assistance if they are arrested," he said.

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