

## **Police declare 'Najib must quit' rally illegal**

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**By Zikri Kamarulzaman**

The protest to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, which is slated to take place outside the Sogo shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur this Saturday, has been declared illegal.

"There is no approval ... the rally is against the law," Dang Wangi police chief Zainol Samah told reporters after meeting representatives of the rally's organisers.

Zainol said the rally contravened the Peaceful Assembly Act because the organisers had not filed a formal notice.

He said their verbal notice was insufficient and that a form must be filled and handed in to the police at least 10 days before the rally is held.

Apart from demanding the prime minister to step down, the protest is also being held in support of incarcerated opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

The protest is organised by a coalition which calls itself 'Kita Lawan'.

Lawyers, however, say that police cannot declare an assembly illegal over failure to give notice, following a recent Court of Appeal decision involving PKR Youth chief Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad.

The Court of Appeal found that Section 9(5) of the Peaceful Assembly Act that penalises organisers of peaceful assemblies for failure to give 10 days' notice is unconstitutional.

"Further, there is no such power for the police to pre-empt and declare any rally as "illegal" under the PAA or any other laws," Lawyers for Liberty chief Eric Paulsen said in a statement.

"It is extremely irresponsible for the police to mislead the public and claim otherwise."

Previously, the police told the organiser to hold their protest in a stadium or at Padang Merbok. But the organisers rejected this.

The rally representatives present today were Nik Nazmi, DAP Youth chief Teo Kok Seong, PAS Youth treasurer Fakhurulrazi Mokhtar and activist Mandeep Singh.

The Dang Wangi police chief also said previous Kita Lawan rallies had disrupted public order and expressed concern for what might happen to bystanders and public property if another protest were to be held in Sogo.

## **Police impose conditions**

"(They) can exercise their right but (they) have to bear in mind that the people outside also have their rights and their freedom to move about," an upset Zainol exclaimed.

"I have told him (Nik Nazmi) that he must bear responsibility for anything that happens because of the protest," he added.

Asked if any arrests will be made that day, Zainol quipped: "If I now say there will be any arrests, no one will show up."

On a more serious note, he said police will only arrest anyone caught breaking the law.

Earlier, the Kita Lawan reps told the media that they have requested police help to manage traffic on that day.

Nik Nazmi disclosed police had also imposed several conditions should kita Lawan go-ahead with plans to hold the rally at Sogo this Saturday.

"We thank the police and we will discuss (these conditions) during our security meeting," he said.