

'Bersih 4 will be a show of no confidence in Najib'

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Kow Gah Chie

The upcoming Bersih 4 rally will represent the people's vote of no confidence in Najib Abdul Razak's premiership, declared Bersih chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah.

With two weeks to go, the coalition of clean and fair elections officially launched its 34-hour mammoth rally - to be held on Aug 29 and 30 - last night at Petaling Jaya Civic Hall.

"We are here today with a heavy heart because our nation has arrived at a critical moment," Chin told the 500-strong crowd at the event.

"Corruption is destroying both our economy and nation. We must rise up not to overthrow the government with violence, but to instead reject corrupt leaders and the political system that produces corrupt leaders," she said.

Maria lamented that Bersih had been accused by its detractors for being "partisan", while others described the coalition's demands as being detrimental to parliamentary democracy.

"But are Bersih's demands unreasonable?" thundered Maria.

Bersih has urged Najib to go on leave pending investigations into the alleged RM2.6 billion 'political funding' deposited in his personal bank accounts.

The coalition has also called for wide-ranging institution reforms and had given the premier one month to respond to its demands.

Instead, Maria lamented that Najib had not only no intention to allow the probe to be carried out independently, he even obstructed the investigations.

"Bersih 4 is the manifestation of the rakyat's voice for a no-confidence vote on Najib (in Parliament)," she said.

"This is nothing personal. Bersih 4 wants to get rid of the political system that created corruption," she said.

The coalition has also called for a 18-month transition government to cleanse the political system before the next general election.

Without institutional reforms, Maria said a new prime minister will be embroiled in similar scandals, such as the 1Malaysia Development Berhad or Port Klang Free Zone scandals that have crippled the country.

Take ownership of our nation

Maria said Bersih's greatest success has been to encourage Malaysians to take ownership of their nation.

"Bersih 1 in 2007 brought about the political tsunami in 2008, while the 2011 rally broke the wall of distrust among Malaysians from diverse ethnicities and faiths when they helped one another to face police brutality.

"Bersih 3 in 2012 mobilised tens of thousands of Malaysians to clean up the 13th General Elections," she said.

"Once again, Bersih 4 will amplify the sacred voice of the people. Bersih 4 will demand real democratisation to end corruption and save our economy," she said.

She warned Najib's future successor against disregarding the rakyat's voice as more Bersih rallies will await them.

The Aug 29-30 rally was called in the wake of public uproar over the 1MDB scandal and RM2.6 billion political donation allegedly found in Najib's bank accounts.

The police have apparently allowed Bersih 4 - a rally endorsed by 90 NGOs - on the condition that it does not advocate "overthrowing the government".

But they later reportedly refused to acknowledge a notice submitted by Bersih for its planned overnight rally.

G25's Noor Farida backs Bersih 4

Speakers at yesterday's event spoke on a stage with a giant backdrop portraying two cops arresting a Bersih protester.

Many of those at the event were clad in yellow T-shirts, while some had their faces painted with a "B" on them.

G25 spokesperson Noor Farida Ariffin, who attended the event on her personal capacity, said politicians and senior civil servants should declare their assets to auditors, who are empowered to verify their bank accounts.

The prerequisite to political funding reform is transparency, she stressed. The nation needs to restore its public institutions to provide check and balance to the government, she added.

"I think the attorney-general should not act as both advisor to the government and public prosecutor at the same time, these (roles) should be separated," said Noor Farida.

She also called for the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim) to focus on its educational, research and advisory role instead of meddling into matters of personal crime and personal sin.

As for Jakim, there is no role for the agency in moral policing for personal crime and personal sin," she said, drawing applause from the crowd.

"Malaysia is the only country which has turned personal sin into a crime against state."

The former diplomat was referring to Jakim's latest Friday sermon, which urged Muslims not to vilify the country's leaders if they love Islam.

"In the era of corruption, Jakim can use its advisory role to urge the condemnation of corruption, which is consistent with the teaching of Quran," she said.

Former Bersih chairperson A Samad Said (photo), social activist Hishamuddin Rais, PKR vice-president Tian Chua, DAP vice-president Teresa Kok and Gerakan Harapan Baru's Mohamad Sabu were among those at the event.

Bersih also revealed its security team which will be on hand to ensure the safety of rally goers. They will be wearing vests displaying the words 'Pemantau Pilihanraya'.

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