

Rallies that cause ethnic tensions a no-no, says PM

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PARLIAMENT | The government has no tolerance for rallies which cause inter-ethnic tensions, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said.

He said this in a written parliamentary reply to Teresa Kok (DAP-Seputeh) who asked if the prime minister supports the Sept 16's Himpunan Rakyat Bersatu rally given that the rally had racial undertones and could affect national harmony.

Kok (photo) also asked if the rally, which organisers said was to "defend Malay dignity", undermines Najib's 1Malaysia slogan.

In the written reply, Najib did not express his personal stand but said the government "does not compromise on offences related to public assemblies, which undermine unity".

"Organisers and participants who make remarks with racial underpinnings are irresponsible, and can undermine unity.

"The government is clear on this and opposes any effort to undermine unity and harmony," he said.

He said organisers must be "sensitive to consequences on public order", including its impact on traffic and traders.

"Organisers must use their wisdom and express their views in a way that reflect eastern values, be more disciplined and respect the Rukun Negara - a set of principles which must be upheld by all Malaysians," he said.

'Malays will not be insulted'

Himpunan Rakyat Bersatu, better known as the red shirt rally, was called in response to the Bersih 4 rally on Aug 29 and 30. Both rallies were in Kuala Lumpur.

Among others, the Bersih 4 rally was to call for Najib's resignation amid corruption allegations, and was predominantly attended by Chinese protesters.

MCA and several BN parties opposed the red shirt rally, which was backed by Umno.

Najib, who is also Umno president and BN chairperson, then said the coalition agreed to disagree on the matter.

Earlier, the government said 15 investigation papers were opened on suspected offences at the red shirt rally.

Speaking about the rally on Sunday, organiser National Silat Federation (Pesaka) chairperson Ali Rustam (photo, right) said the organisation was ready to go to war, if ever challenged.

He said the rally was called to show that there are still Malays in Kuala Lumpur who will stand up for themselves when insulted.

Najib (photo, left) in a speech read out by a representative at the same event declared silat the third line of national defence.

He also lauded the rally as peaceful, in a speech at an earlier Pesaka event two days after the rally.

Among others, proponent of the red shirt rally said Bersih 4 participants insulted Malay dignity when some of them stomped on a picture of Najib and PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang.

Bersih (Coalition for clean and fair elections) said Ali's reference to violence was a threat to public order and action should be taken against him.

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