

**Protests too in Penang, Kuching**  
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**Athi Veerangan**

Some 50 people, mostly PKR members, held a peaceful assembly at Komtar in George Town, Penang this afternoon to protest against the drastic fuel hike.  
MCPX

They held placards condemning the hike, chanted anti-government slogans and called on Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to step down immediately.

Amidst shouts of 'reformasi', the protesters chanted: "BN is cruel; Pak Lah is cruel, even Dr Mahathir is cruel."

petrol price hike protest penang 060608 03They called on the ordinary citizens to join them to show their frustration against the "extraordinary and unreasonable" hike in petrol and diesel prices, which have gone up to RM2.70 and RM2.58 per litre respectively.

Concerns were raised that the sharp price hike would trigger a surge in social problems such as a drastic increase in city crime.

Penang government executive councillor Abdul Malik Abdul Kassim, Penang Watch coordinator BK Ong, PKR youth exco members Zulkifli Ibrahim and Amazudin Ahmad took turns to address the protesters, who were outnumbered by curious on-lookers, police personnel and journalists.

The peaceful assembly held at 2.40pm were were frequently punctuated by the officer-in-charge from the city police, ASP Fauzi Yusof, who gave the demonstrators only 20 minutes to hold the protest.

However, they remained calm, composed and abided Fauzi's order, duly dispersed 20 minutes later at 3pm.

According to Ong, the assembly was organised through SMSes, not by any individual or organisation.

**Wake up!**

Using a loud hailer, Abdul Malik, who is in charge of domestic trade and consumer affairs portfolios, urged the people spend their hard earned wage prudently in wake of the exorbitant hike.

petrol price hike protest penang 060608 06In the last financial year-end report, Petronas recorded a profit of RM46.4 billion which was 7.7 percent higher than the year before.

Citing that for each US\$1 hike per barrel, the national oil company Petronas would enjoy a RM250 million increase in annual earnings, he ticked off the federal government for profiteering at the expense of the people.

He accused Abdullah's administration of being reckless in effecting a sudden huge hike,

rather than adopting a more pragmatic approach by introducing gradual increase.

Kebun Bunga state assemblyperson Jason Ong Khan Lee, who was at the scene, cautioned that the fuel hike would elicit social unrest and spark off new wave of criminality as middle and lower wage earners would struggle to meet the ends.

He warned that the surging cost would force several industries to close down or downsize, resulting in economy collapse.

"The federal government should review the fuel hike immediately to prevent such socio-economic tribulations," he said.

### **Change YOUR lifestyle**

petrol price hike protest penang 060608 04BK Ong (photo:left) questioned whether the government leaders were prepared to change their lifestyle, a cliché used to the people, to adjust to the fuel hike.

"They should eat less, cook less, travel less, socialise less, tighten their belts, buy less cars, use less energy and perhaps live lifeless.

"Are they prepared to do so?" he shouted to the crowd, adding that politicians should not preach what they won't practice.

Zulkifli Ibrahim and Amizudin Ahmad, both called on Abdullah to step down immediately to rescue the people from their misery.

"This is cruel and bad governance. A handful of government leaders want to profiteer at the expense of the majority," he said.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's political secretary and Kampung Kolam state assemblyperson Ng Wei Aik attempted to evade blame on the state government and called on the people to protest against the hike.

"It's a misdeed by the federal, not the state administration. We fear that the hike would set off social problems, which would further complicate the situation," he said.

### **Two demos in Kuching**

Meanwhile in Kuching, reports Abdul Hakim Bujang, Sarawak PKR leaders also continued with their oil price hike protest by staging two soft demos in Kampung No 4 and Bau respectively.

petrol price hike protest kuching 060608 03The first demo was held right after Friday prayers by a group of PKR members led by its deputy chairman Baharuddin Mokhsen and Abang Zulkifli Abang Engkeh.

They distributed flyers and display banners and placard condemning Sarawak elected representative for not taking any action against unjust move.

After chanting slogans, the group moved to Bau to join another team led by its chairperson,

Dominique Ng to stage a protest in front of Bau district council office.

Dominique and Zulkifli said more such demo would be held soon statewide.

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