

Najib's Promises Ring Hollow, Police Conduct Unacceptable
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In his speech on the eve of Malaysia Day, Prime Minister Najib Razak had mentioned that his administration would not hesitate to review, revise or abolish legislation which is obsolete: "The Government will act in accordance with the provision of Article 10 of the Federal Constitution, while guided by the principle that street protests are firmly rejected, shall revise the relevant provisions of Section 27 of the Police Act, 1967, to enhance the rights of the people to freedom of assembly."

However, not even 3 weeks have lapsed since the above speech, the FRU - on the pretext of it being an illegal assembly - intervened forcefully in the "109 Green Assembly" held in Taman Gelora, Kuantan last Sunday, causing the planned activities to end much earlier than scheduled.

The move effectively debunked Najib's rallying call for reform and exposed Najib's "transformation" efforts as mere rhetoric and that he clearly did not mean what he said on 15 Sept.

The organisers of the assembly had obtained a police permit for their function but the police withdrew the permit at the last minute, on the night before the function on the pretext that other organisations were also having activities at the same venue.

Cancelling the permit in such a rushed manner renders it impossible for the organisers to notify all the participants who are converging from various locations. The police's action is grossly irresponsible and designed to cause inconvenience.

After stinging criticism against the BN administration following their brutal response to Bersih's peaceful demonstration on 9 July, we would expect the police to have learnt a lesson but they still messed up horribly during the 109 Green Assembly.

According to government statistics, the number of PDRM personnel increased from 82,135 in 2001 to 126,051 in 2011. According to the latest Economic Report 2011/2012 prepared by the Ministry of Finance, Malaysia's population has reached 28.55 million. In other words, the police to population ratio is 1:226. This ratio is better than the Interpol-recommended ratio of 1:250 and better than many developed countries including Singapore (1:396), Australia (1:342) and the United Kingdom (1:380). With such ample manpower, Malaysians should be living in a highly peaceful and safe country but alas, the police focus their enforcement efforts on disrupting peaceful gatherings instead of curbing crime.

For Bersih's 9 July rally which lasted just a few hours, the police deployed 11,046 police personnel to crack down on peaceful demonstrators, spending RM2.01 million in the process. Maybe this is loose change to the police as it represents just 0.03% of their 2011 operating expenses which totalled RM58 billion.

However, if the above amount had been used to build more police beat bases/stations or purchase more enforcement vehicles, I believe that would be more beneficial to the people.

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