

Bersih 3.0 - A Greater PR Disaster For Najib
MalaysianMirror.com
04 May 2012
By Lim Kit Siang

As I said after the Bersih 2.0 rally on July 9 last year, there were many casualties especially the police, the mainstream media and the election commission but the biggest loser of all was undoubtedly the Prime Minister, Najib Razak.

This is even more the case with the Bersih 3.0 "sit-in" last Saturday on April 28 as Bersih 3.0 is an even greater public relations disaster for Najib than Bersih 2.0 – with the damage growing in magnitude and impact when all the horror stories of police rampage of violence and brutality on that day are told where hundreds of thousands of Malaysians who came to Kuala Lumpur in peace were not allowed to disperse in peace.

No reasonable and thinking Malaysian would buy Najib's blame yesterday alleging that Bersih 3.0 organisers were responsible for last Saturday's violence, in particular the police rampage of violence and brutality against peaceful protestors and media representatives.

The excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of police force, whether firing of tear gas and chemically-laced water cannon or downright police violence and brutality, cannot be justify by any breach of the Dataran Merdeka barricades last Saturday.

A critic of the government's gross mishandling of Bersih 2.0 rally for free and fair elections in July last year had urged the Najib administration to discard its "Cold War" mindset and to modernize its concepts to address internal security and national issues.

But this "Cold War" mentality seemed to be very dominant in the gross mishandling of Bersih 3.0 "sit-in" after 3 pm last Saturday.

The Najib administration must again be reminded that the "enemy" is no longer armed communists battling a jungle war but a civilian movement consisting of politically awakened middle class that is wired to the global community and moved by fully legitimate issues based on the Malaysian Constitution such as free and fair elections; human rights of freedom of assembly and association; integrity, good, clean and incorruptible governance!

With regard to the government's gross mishandling of the Bersih 2.0 rally, Najib was able to pause, back track and salvage the situation before more damage is done – resulting in his Malaysia Day speech on September 16 on Political Transformation with a raft of promised reforms on democratic freedoms and human rights.

Is Najib capable of piercing through the fog of self-serving propoganda by his advisers to realise that Bersih 3.0 is an even greater disaster for him than Bersih 2.0, creating the "ugliest day in media history in Malaysia" with reporters and photographers protesting on World Press Freedom Day yesterday wearing black with yellow ribbon and police professionalism suffering its worst "black eye" in history with the police rampage of violence and brutality against peaceful protestors and media representatives?

Does Najib realise for instance that the Home Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein, who had earlier said that Bersih 3.0 was "no security threat" as it had "no traction" and who was very fast in praising "police

restraint and professionalism" despite the worst case of police rampage of violence and brutality, cannot inspire public confidence that there would be a no holds-barred public inquiry into the Bersih 3.0 violence and brutality regardless of the victims – whether the police, journalists or peaceful protestors?

Can Najib pause, backtrack and salvage the situation before more damage is done to his administration and the country's international image from an even more disastrous mishandling of Bersih 3.0 "sit-in" than the Bersih 2.0 rally last July?

Copyright © 2012 www.malaysianmirror.com
<http://www.malaysianmirror.com/media-buzz-detail/6-nation/57580>