

Stop The Bersih 3.0 Demonisation Campaign
MalaysianMirror.com
21 May 2012
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BN government should call off the Bersih 3.0 demonisation campaign as the first step to prove to Malaysians that it is capable of responding rationally and responsibly to legitimate demands for clean elections

The Home Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein said in (last) Saturday's press that Malaysians should view the Bersih 3.0 demonstration in a more rational manner and look at the Government's concern over what could go wrong if people took to the streets.

Unfortunately, in the past three weeks after the Bersih 3.0 rally on April 28, the government as represented by the Home Minister and the Prime Minister Najib Razak have themselves failed this simple test of acting in "a more rational manner" to address the controversies of what went wrong on April 28 resulting in the incidents of violence and brutality, regardless of whether the victims were police personnel, media representatives or peaceful protestors.

Najib and Hishammuddin should call off the Bersih 3.0 demonisation campaign to paint Bersih 3.0, the organizers and participants, in the worst and most sinister light, as the first step for the BN government to prove to Malaysians that it is capable of responding rationally and responsibly to the people's legitimate demands for clean elections.

The Bersih 3.0 demonisation campaign started with the wild and irresponsible allegation by the Prime Minister that it was an anti-national conspiracy which included a coup attempt by the Opposition to topple the government, which conspiracy theory was immediately given blind and unthinking support by the former Inspector-General of Police Hanif Omar when there was no iota of evidence; culminating in the great lie and spin on TV1 on Sunday when the government station telecast a 30-minute "documentary" entitled "Bersih 3.0 itu Kotor" to poison the minds of viewers about Bersih 3.0.

What the BN spin-masters did not realise is that the hundreds of thousands of Malaysians who gathered peacefully in Kuala Lumpur in response to the call of Bersih 3.0, and the millions who have direct information of what actually happened on April 28, could not identify with TV1 programme or agree that Bersih 3.0 was some grand or evil conspiracy to cause violence, unrest and even toppling of the government!

In fact, they could only be turned off and completely alienated by the TV1 screen which is available on YouTube – not only because it was so untrue but so unfair!

To them, Bersih 3.0 will forever remain a historic, momentous and even liberating experience where Malaysians regardless race, religion, region, class, age or gender came out together in peace and common humanity, out of a deep and abiding sense of patriotism and love for country, in support of the national cause for clean elections for a clean Malaysia.

All that they were armed were salt and water bottles, not to combat the police or topple the government, but to protect themselves in case of police tear gas and chemically-laced water cannon in order to send out the clear and unmistakable message that 54 years after Merdeka in 1957, Malaysians want clean elections and a clean Malaysia!

True, there were deplorable incidents of violence and brutality which marred the Bersih 3.0 rally – but these deplorable incidents took place after 3 pm on April 28.

Before 3 pm, there was absolutely no tension in the air, as the hundreds of thousands who gathered in Kuala Lumpur were peaceful, in great harmony and carnival spirit, to celebrate the unprecedented democratic awakening, empowerment and unity of Malaysians.

This why Malaysians want an impartial, thorough and high-powered inquiry to find out what went wrong on April 28 and who marred the Bersih 3.0 rally – whether it was caused by a handful of protestors or a small group of police personnel, who took the law into their own hands and started a riot against the peaceful public.

This is also why the independent advisory panel headed by former IGP Hanif Omar to inquire into the Bersih 3.0 violence and brutality is completely unacceptable to the majority of thinking and decent Malaysians, not because Hanif was former IGP but for the simple reason that he had prejudged Bersih 3.0 with baseless and biased views after April 28.

If Najib and Hishammuddin want credibility and legitimacy for any findings of a Bersih 3.0 inquiry, they should heed the call which finds resonance in the country as well as in international circles for a completely new inquiry panel and not proceed with the panel headed by Hanif.

Form either a Royal Commission of Inquiry, a Suhakam inquiry or best of all, invite the United Nations rapporteurs, namely Frank La Rue on the promotion and the protection of the right to freedom and expression and Maina Kiai on the right to freedom of assembly and of association, to carry out independent investigations and present their report to the Malaysian people and government as well as the international community.

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