

'Peaceful Assembly' protest turns poetry recital
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 3 — The second KLCC protest against the new assembly law became a poetry recital session instead, with national laureate Datuk A. Samad Said reciting his latest poem, Merindu Ruang to a crowd donned in yellow clothing.

"Make yourself comfortable, it's going to be a party," Bersih 2.0 steering committee member Wong Chin Huat told a crowd of about 200 today at the park adjacent to the Petronas twin towers and prominent city building.

"We will fight violence with the beauty of literature," he added.

The crowd was joined by among others, DAP lawmakers Lim Kit Siang, Tony Pua, and Lim Lip Eng.

Today's demonstration, last half an hour, was the second to be organised by the Freedom to Assemble Campaign, a coalition of over 30 NGOs.

Lim Kit Siang (left), Samad (centre) and Wong sing the 'Negaraku' to end the demonstration on December 3, 2011.

A week ago, almost 300 people gathered here to protest the Peaceful Assembly Bill.

Both occasions ended with KLCC security personnel requesting the crowd to disperse.

Today, Wong was told that he needed the permission from KLCC's management to gather in the park.

But he told reporters later that they will continue to hold protests every Saturday at KLCC until the law is revoked.

The Peaceful Assembly Bill, which bans street demonstrations, was passed on November 29 on BN votes after the opposition Pakatan Rakyat bloc staged a walkout.

"We must have a parliamentary select committee before the Peaceful Assembly Bill becomes law, we want public consultation. All of us want to give our views in a real democracy," Lim said to the crowd.

The controversial law bans all street protests, imposes far stricter requirements on rally organisers as well as higher fines for more offences and gives blanket powers to the police.

Today, Wong brushed aside any suspicion over the coincidence that the main area between KLCC and the park was closed to the public for cleaning, on both days.

"We are very heartened that for two weeks in a row they have shown their support for us with actions. That counts a lot. They are spreading the awareness of being clean," he said cheekily.

"We are defying the law because it is unjust, it is unreasonable, it is an insult to our

intelligence and common sense and we want to show how ridiculous it is when a security guard says you need to apply for permit before you can read and listen to someone reading poems.

"If the law is passed, we will do it again. We want to get the state to arrest us and charge us in court for holding balloons, for carrying flags, for singing the national anthem without permit, without notifying the police 10 days in advance. The law needs to go, kill the bill," he said.

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