

**World spotlight for Bersih: Sister-rallies in Korea, Japan, Australia, US
Malaysia Today
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Written by Wong Choon Mei, Malaysia Chronicle**

UPDATED In a move that will put the global spotlight on Malaysia and prevent Prime Minister Najib Razak's government from using unsavory means to thwart citizens, civil rights group Bersih announced that overseas rallies will be held simultaneously with its upcoming July 9 *Walk for Democracy* in Kuala Lumpur.

Bersih said the overseas demonstrations were initiated by Malaysians who lived abroad, who supported the demands and objectives of the Bersih 2.0 rally. The solidarity rallies will be held in Seoul, Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, Osaka, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York.

"We regard this wide interest by the Malaysian diaspora as an indication that Malaysians from all walks of life believe in the need for electoral reform and the upholding of democracy," the Bersih organising committee said in a statement out on Thursday.

"Malaysian citizens living abroad should rise to the occasion and demand for their right to vote via postal ballot in the upcoming 13th General Election."

Malaysians reach out to help each other

The Bersih 2.0 or *Walk for Democracy* is a rally organized by 62 civil rights NGOs. It aims to hand over a memorandum to the King, demanding critical reforms ahead of snap general elections widely expected to be held soon.

The Bersih committee is made up of chairman Ambiga Sreenevasan, Andrew Khoo, K. Arumugam, Dr Farouk Musa, Haris Ibrahim, Liau Kok Fah, Maria Chin Abdullah, Richard YW Yeoh, Dr Toh Kin Woon, Dr Wong Chin Huat, Yeo Yang Poh, Zaid Kamaruddin, Dr Subramaniam Pillay and Arul Prakkash.

Bersih is also worried because in its last rally in 2007, the government unleashed a brutal police force on some 50,000 demonstrators, using tear gas and chemical-laced water canon sprays.

This year, Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussien has refused to grant any permits, thereby making the rally illegal. His high-handed ban sparked an immediate storm of protest.

"By refusing to issue a permit is to make it illegal. So to punish those who take part is very unfair. Why should the permit be withheld in the first place? By doing so, the government will be seen as forcing the people to take part in an illegal activity," Ramon Navaratnem, past president of Transparency International told *Malaysia Chronicle*.

Ethnic cleansing to death threats

The Pakatan Rakyat led by Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim has declared support for the rally's anti-election fraud platform. PAS president Hadi Awang has ordered all of the party's 1 million members to attend.

However, Najib's government opposes it and has roused a host of racial rights groups such as Perkasa and its chief Ibrahim Ali to scare off the crowds. Ibrahim angered his fellow countrymen by threatening ethnic cleansing against the Malaysian Chinese,

warning of a reprisal of the May 13, 1969, racial riots where extremist Malay groups had kill scores of ethnic Chinese.

As in the past, the Najib administration protected Ibrahim and refused to punish him for his overtly seditious comments. On Thursday, a crudely-worded death threat was sent to the well-respected Ambiga.

That was the last straw. It galvanized Malaysia's entire civil society movement into action and Bersih to vow the rally would go on regardless of Najib's worst efforts.

A successful rally is seen as a slap in the face for Najib's leadership. In office since April 2009, he is seen as the worst premier since independence in 1957. He has resorted to a mix of racial and religious politicking used by former premier Mahathir Mohamad and launched an unprecedented wave of gutter politicking against Anwar.

From sodomy charges to a sex video scandal, the Najib regime mercilessly hounded the Opposition Leader, without realizing they had stirred deep public disgust for themselves. Critics also believe Najib and his cohorts are now seeking ways to destroy the popularity of newly-minted PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu.

Date: 9 July 2011 Time: 3pm Venue: Malaysian High Commission, 4-1 Hannam-dong, 140-210, **Seoul**

Date: 9 July 2011 Time: 12.00pm Venue: Malaysian Consulate in **Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney (simultaneous)**

Date: 9 July 2011 Time: 3.00pm Venue: Tower of the Sun, **Osaka**

Date: 9 July 2011 Time: 10.00am Venue: Consulate General of Malaysia, 550 South Hope Street, Suite 400, **Los Angeles**

Date: 9 July 2011 Time: 9.30am Venue: Chrissy Field Picnic Area, Presidio, **San Francisco**

Date: 9 July 2011 Time: 10.00am Venue: Consulate General of Malaysia, 313 East 43rd Street, **New York**

[Related Story: Long-overdue Chinese anger erupts: Why they must vote anyone but the BN](#)

- *Malaysia Chronicle*

Malaysia Chronicle appends below the 8 reforms drawn up and demanded on behalf of Malaysians by the the Bersih steering committee:

1. Clean the electoral roll

The electoral roll is marred with irregularities such as deceased persons and multiple persons registered under a single address or non-existent addresses. The electoral roll must be revised and updated to wipe out these 'phantom voters'. The rakyat have a right to an electoral roll that is an accurate reflection of the voting population.

In the longer term, BERSIH 2.0 also calls for the EC to implement an automated voter registration system upon eligibility to reduce irregularities.

2. Reform postal ballot

The current postal ballot system must be reformed to ensure that all citizens of Malaysia are able to exercise their right to vote. Postal ballot should not only be open for all Malaysian citizens living abroad, but also for those within the country who cannot be physically present in their voting constituency on polling day. Police, military and civil servants too must vote normally like other voters if not on duty on polling day.

The postal ballot system must be transparent. Party agents should be allowed to monitor the entire process of postal voting.

3. Use of indelible ink

Indelible ink must be used in all elections. It is a simple, affordable and effective solution in preventing voter fraud. In 2007, the EC decided to implement the use of indelible ink. However, in the final days leading up to the 12th General Elections, the EC decided to withdraw the use of indelible ink citing legal reasons and rumours of sabotage.

BERSIH 2.0 demands for indelible ink to be used for all the upcoming elections. Failure to do so will lead to the inevitable conclusion that there is an intention to allow voter fraud.

4. Minimum 21 days campaign period

The EC should stipulate a campaign period of not less than 21 days. A longer campaign period would allow voters more time to gather information and deliberate on their choices. It will also allow candidates more time to disseminate information to rural areas. The first national elections in 1955 under the British Colonial Government had a campaign period of 42 days but the campaign period for 12th GE in 2008 was a mere 8 days.

5. Free and fair access to media

It is no secret that the Malaysian mainstream media fails to practice proportionate, fair and objective reporting for political parties of all divide. BERSIH 2.0 calls on the EC to press for all media agencies, especially state-funded media agencies such as Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM) and Bernama to allocate proportionate and objective coverage for all political parties.

6. Strengthen public institutions

Public institutions must act independently and impartially in upholding the rule of law and democracy. Public institutions such as the Judiciary, Attorney-General, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency (MACC), Police and the EC must be reformed to act independently, uphold laws and protect human rights.

In particular, the EC must perform its constitutional duty to act independently and impartially so as to enjoy public confidence. The EC cannot continue to claim that they have no power to act, as the law provides for sufficient powers to institute a credible electoral system.

7. Stop corruption

Corruption is a disease that has infected every aspect of Malaysian life. BERSIH 2.0 and the rakyat demand for an end to all forms of corruption. Current efforts to eradicate corruption are mere tokens to appease public grouses. We demand that serious action is taken against ALL allegations of corruption, including vote buying.

8. Stop dirty politics

Malaysians are tired of dirty politics that has been the main feature of the Malaysian political arena. We demand for all political parties and politicians to put an end to gutter

politics. As citizens and voters, we are not interested in gutter politics; we are interested in policies that affect the nation.

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