

**Najib agrees to meet Bersih over rally venue**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

PUTRAJAYA, July 5 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak declared today that the government is ready to meet Bersih 2.0 to negotiate an appropriate venue for its July 9 rally but reminded the coalition that the offer would be conditional.

“I understand that Bersih wants to have a meeting with the government soon to consider the possibility of holding their demonstration in a stadium.

“We are ready to meet with them on that but on condition that they go in peace and leave in peace,” he said.



The prime minister said this during a brief press conference at his office here this afternoon to respond to the recent developments surrounding the rally that was called to demand for free and fair elections.

Najib (**picture**) declined, however, to say if he had met the Yang di-Pertuan Agong this morning despite mounting speculation, but noted his thanks to the constitutional monarch for his intervention.

“When I meet the King is my right and as the prime minister, I am the chief adviser to the King,” he said.

Najib added that it was due to the King’s intervention that all three rally organisers had decided not to hold their gatherings on the streets, which, he said, could threaten public peace and safety.

He praised the King for acting “responsibly and out of his deep concern” for the people’s welfare when the Ruler stepped in to call for a consensus between the government and Bersih 2.0 instead of a public protest.

“I would like to offer my thanks that all parties have chosen to respect his majesty’s wishes and with this, there will be no street demonstration this July 9,” he said.

Najib also claimed that both Umno Youth and Malay rights group Perkasa, which were initially scheduled to hold counter-protests this July 9, would not proceed with their plans.

"They are not going to do it. Because if Umno wants to respond, they will hold even larger gatherings. I can assure you, the crowd will be very big," he said.

Both Umno Youth and Perkasa said yesterday that they would call off their rallies entirely if Bersih 2.0 agreed to do the same.

Bersih 2.0 decided to accept the government's offer to hold its gathering at a stadium after their leaders were granted a rare audience with the King at Istana Negara this afternoon.

In an unprecedented move on Sunday, Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin stepped in to diffuse tension by advising the Najib administration and Bersih 2.0 to hold consultations over the issue of free and fair elections.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein outlawed Bersih 2.0 effective July 1, saying it was inciting the people and creating an atmosphere of unrest. The police have also arrested more than 100 people in connection with the rally, most of them for wearing yellow T-shirts with the word Bersih emblazoned on them.

Police have also detained six Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) members, including Sungai Siput MP Dr Michael Jeyakumar Devaraj, for 60 days under the Emergency Ordinance in relation to the planned rally.

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