

Rela will act against unruly demonstrators, says Najib
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SERDANG, Jan 28 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak today issued an open warning to would-be demonstrators, saying that the paramilitary People's Volunteer Corps (Rela) was ready to defend the country from turmoil.

Speaking in front of an estimated 20,000 Rela members here, the prime minister pledged his administration's commitment to look after the interests and welfare of the corps.

"When the chips are down, Rela will be with this government to defend the country.

"Do not cause havoc in this country because the 2.8 million Rela members will not stand idly by and watch the country descend into chaos," he said to a chorus of approval from the audience.

Najib pointed out that the government allowed peaceful demonstration in accordance with the recently-passed Peaceful Assembly Act, but maintained that the country's peace and security was his administration's utmost priority.

He acknowledged Rela's past contributions to the country and said that the time had come to escalate its role and function in society.

"We are looking at the current Act, and a new Act will be tabled to Parliament soon," said the PM.

"We want to see a cleaning up of Rela's organisational structure, a new image...Rela has to become more professional, its image can be upgraded," said Najib.

He told Rela members here that the country faced "new threats" like drugs and human trafficking, and that the corps will play a pivotal part in tackling these threats.

"Peace, national security, has to go back to the will of the people... the will of the people is seen through the chosen government, why it is chosen by the people, legitimate," he added.

Najib's administration came under widespread condemnation for its clampdown on the Bersih 2.0 rally for electoral reform in July last year, which saw nearly 2,000 arrested leading up to and during the march.

But authorities allowed opposition supporters to gather at the Kuala Lumpur High Court on January 9 in support of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim ahead of the verdict for his sodomy charge.

Today, Najib also announced an additional allowance of RM2 per hour for Rela officers, and said that the government's goal was to "strengthen" Rela as an organisation.

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