

**Najib: Pakatan should not hide behind street protests**  
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**By Ida Lim**

PUTRAJAYA, April 30 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak has challenged the opposition to let the public decide their fate through elections instead of “hiding behind” street protests, in an allusion to the weekend’s Bersih 3.0 sit-ins across the world.

His Barisan Nasional (BN) government has blamed the opposition for the chaos during Saturday’s Bersih rally in Kuala Lumpur, which saw demonstrators clash with police after tear gas and water cannons were deployed against them repeatedly.

“The opposition should not hide behind violent street protests,” the prime minister said in his speech announcing the national minimum wage policy for the private sector tonight.

He suggested that the opposition’s aspersion against the impartiality and fairness of the country’s institutions reflected their “fears and worries” at not getting the public’s support in the next general election.

He dared Pakatan Rakyat (PR) to “be brave (enough) to compete in the democratic arena, in the market of ideas...in a fair, independent and competitive manner.”

“Be prepared to be scrutinised and judged by Malaysians, based on vision, ideas, policies, programmes and existing track records,” he added.

Najib also said that the “people’s wishes are reflected through the ballot box.”

PR must not “follow their own desires and sacrifice the future of the country and its citizens,” the BN chairman said.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had earlier today said the Bersih sit-in protest on Saturday was part of the opposition’s agenda to carry out “regime change”.

The non-partisan civil society movement Bersih had called for its third rally to push for electoral reforms, citing the government’s lack of commitment to carry out major improvements to the election process as a reason for doing so.

Saturday’s rally for free and fair elections turned chaotic when Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) personnel began firing tear gas and water cannons after demonstrators breached police lines in their attempt to reach Dataran Merdeka.

The event was initially planned for the historic square but authorities had secured a court order on Friday barring its use for public assemblies until May 1, forcing Bersih supporters to splinter into groups.

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