

**Polls date not dependent on Bersih 3.0, says Najib**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

PUTRAJAYA, May 3 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak today brushed off speculation that national polls may be delayed following the Bersih 3.0 fracas, saying the date would be decided on how the people view the government.

Several foreign media reports have predicted that the Najib administration may have to postpone the 13th general election due to a possible negative backlash on the government over its handling of last Saturday's protest.

But the prime minister, responding to the speculation at a press conference here, smiled when posed the question and said, "The date of the election is not contingent upon all this."

He then turned on reporters instead to ask for their preferred polls date and laughed when it was suggested that elections should be called as soon as possible.

"Well, it's up to the public to decide. We will decide on the basis of how the people view the government, you see," he said.

Najib repeated that government's support for a free and fair elections and that he wished Bersih had accepted the authorities' offer to use Stadium Merdeka for last Saturday's protest.

The violence that ensued in the melee that followed the protesters' alleged breach of the barricades surrounding Dataran Merdeka, the venue that Bersih had insisted on using for its rally instead of Stadium Merdeka, could have been avoided, the prime minister insisted.

"There are certain things we can control and certain things we cannot.

"My only wish is that they had listened to our advice and we were very sincere... (If they had held the protest) have it in a stadium, and everything would have been fine.

"We are all for fair and clean elections as well," he said.

Chaos broke the usual hustle and bustle on the streets of Kuala Lumpur for over four hours after 3pm when police fired tear gas and water cannons and chased protesters down the streets of the capital to disperse what had initially started out as a peaceful protest calling for free and fair elections.

Some six local pressmen and about 12 photographers and journalists from the foreign media were reportedly assaulted during the fracas on Saturday, after the police moved to block them from snapping photographs of protesters getting arrested.

Both local and foreign media groups have condemned the hard-handed tactics used on the

media, whom they pointed out were merely doing their jobs.

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