

Bersih 3.0 an attempt to overthrow elected government, says PM
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 4 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today the Bersih 3.0 rally last Saturday was an attempt to topple the government, as he hardened his administration's position on the electoral reform movement.

The prime minister told a rally in Kelantan broadcast live on television that the April 28 demonstrators had wanted more than to rally in Dataran Merdeka for a few hours.

Najib said the Bersih rally was an attempt to take over Putrajaya. — File pic
"They wanted to occupy the square for days. That was why Bersih 3.0 organisers had rejected the government's offer for the event to be held at other venues including Stadium Merdeka.

"Their intention was purely political. It was an attempt to take over Putrajaya.

"They had wanted to overthrow the government that was elected by the people," he was reported as saying by The Star Online at the 1 Malaysia community carnival launch in Gua Musang.

Yesterday, Najib appeared to blame Bersih 3.0 organisers for last Saturday's violence, saying if the group had accepted the government's Stadium Merdeka offer, "these things would not have happened at all".

He said the gathering for free and fair elections would have been peaceful if it had been held at the stadium as the authorities would have facilitated the event.

He cited protests in modern societies like the United States and United Kingdom as examples, saying it was difficult to avoid altercations among protesters.

This, he explained, was also the main reason why his administration had enacted the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011, which was mooted last year to better regulate public gatherings after the fracas of Bersih's last rally in July last year.

The Peaceful Assembly Act 2011, which came into force just days before the Bersih 3.0 rally, prohibits street protests but allows public gatherings in designated areas of assembly, which the government has yet to determine.

Chaos reigned on the streets of Kuala Lumpur for over four hours after 3pm last Saturday 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.

The violence has resulted in finger-pointing by all parties involved, even as police investigations are being carried out.

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