

Student groups yield to royal concert, 'Occupy Dataran' stays
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By Ida Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 — Student activist groups will suspend until Sunday their ongoing campaign at Dataran Merdeka, in deference to a concert in honour of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, while "Occupy Dataran" is refusing to vacate the site.

"(From) tonight, there will be no events until Sunday evening, because we respect the Agong," said Mohd Syahid Mohd Zaini, president of student group Malaysia Bangkit.

Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia and Legasi Mahasiswa Progresif, the other student groups present, said they will also follow suit.

A royal concert is due to be held at the location to commemorate the Agong's recent installation, from 10am to 11.30pm tomorrow.

Despite the student groups' decision to move out from the square, the "Occupy Dataran" movement has said it will remain throughout the entire concert performance.

"Dataran Merdeka is a public space for all, that is large enough to be shared by all, it's not just for us," Fahmi Reza, a spokesman for the "Occupy" campaign, told The Malaysian Insider.

Both groups have taken pains to distinguish their causes from one another, saying that they share the same location but not similar aims.

The student activists have been camping out in tents, in shifts, since last Saturday after hundreds of them marched across the city's capital to lobby for free tertiary education, after being disenchanted by pay-back terms and conditions over the government's higher education loan scheme.

"Occupy Dataran", meanwhile, said it seeks to reclaim public spaces for the purpose of promoting participatory democracy.

Yesterday morning, the groups said they were attacked by a mob of about 60 to 70 unidentified assailants garbed in black who demanded that they return home.

Today, Syahid said he expects more police reports to be lodged over the incident.

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