

My impressions of Bersih 3.0
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 30 — At age 70, I attended Bersih 3.0, the first rally I have ever been to.

Why? I suddenly realised that I have lost 50 years being apolitical and complacent. It is better late than never.

So with the noble aim of saving my motherland, I went. As many of my contemporaries would say, "We have let our children down".

At 9.30 am, April 28, we (my Universiti Malaya mate, Boey; his daughter, Elain; her husband and two other friends) assembled on the platform of the Kelana Jaya LRT station.

At that hour, there was already a sizable crowd. I noticed most were youths in yellow T-shirts and some carrying Bersih banners. Others were posing for group photo shoots. The mood was one of gaiety.

The excitement was palpable. For me, it was a concoction of euphoria and apprehension. Happy that I was going to be in the thick of history in the making, and a little worried that I might end up in jail. Or worst, get beaten up to a bloody pulp.

On the train, everyone was smiling knowingly to each other. It was easy to pick up conversations with total strangers because there was an unspoken feeling that we were all in this together, for better or for worse. By the time the train left the second stop, it was packed.

At our destination, Pasar Seni, I saw the familiar diminutive, frail figure of Pak Samad with his signature long, white beard, dressed in black, surrounded by some 10 policemen in blue.

My first thought was, "OMG! They have arrested him." But it turned out that he was obligingly posing for photographs with the men in blue for Bersih fans.

From my backpack I got out a bunch of maroon Bougainvilleas, picked from my garden, and offered these to the nearest policeman. He declined to accept. I shook his hand. Then I presented them to Pak Samad. Mechanically, he took it, without a word, without a sound.

Meanwhile, Boey was seen posing for a photos with Mohd Nizar Jamaluddin, the ex-mentri besar of Perak. He told Boey, "I brought my mother, too."

Next, we unanimously decided to look for something to eat. (I thought we came for a more serious mission. Have we got our priorities right?) We proceeded to Central Market and Foch avenue. There, only a few coffee shops were opened. They were the ones who made a bundle that day.

By 10.30am, we sat down on the road in front of the HSBC branch. We couldn't get any

nearer to the Dataran. That's as far as the crowd would permit. The road was a swollen yellow river. We sang NegaraKu. We chanted "Bersih! Bersih!Bersih!"

We were orderly. I felt the energy of the rakyat coursing through my veins.

Someone shouted "Reformasi! Reformasi!". I thought that was not very nice. We should just stick faithfully to Bersih, period. Don't rain on Ambiga Sreenevasan's parade.

The odour of tear gas wafted through the hot afternoon air signalled the end of the rally for us. People were shouting urgently, "Move away! Move away! Keep moving. Don't stop."

In the melee I was separated from my group. I reunited with my buddies at Kelana Jaya.

* This is the personal opinion of the writer and does not necessarily represent the views of The Malaysian Insider

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