

Rafizi shows proof Padang Merbok available for June 22 rally
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BY CLARA CHOOI

KUALA LUMPUR, June 11 — PKR's Rafizi Ramli revealed today that no event has been scheduled to take place at Padang Merbok this June 22, suggesting inaccuracy in KL Mayor Datuk Ahmad Phasal Talib's claim that the venue would not be available for Pakatan Rakyat's #Black505 rally.

The PKR strategy director said he personally investigated Ahmad's claim yesterday and discovered that the McDonald's Olympic Run by the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) is scheduled to take place on June 23 at Dataran Merdeka and not Padang Merbok.

"I checked the MOM Facebook page for further information about the run," he said in a statement here, referring to the OCM's Malay acronym.

"Discovered that the run was not taking place at Padang Merbok but will start and finish at Dataran Merdeka," he added.

The Pandan MP said his probe did not stop there.

To make sure that the event was really to be held at the historic independence square, he said he even checked the website of the Pacesetters Athletic Club Malaysia (PACM), which is participating in the run.

At the club's website, Rafizi said it was confirmed that the event would be held at Dataran Merdeka, not at Padang Merbok.

OCM calendar shows June 23 has been earmarked for the McDonald's fun run. — Picture courtesy of Rafizi Ramli"Finally, I checked the run's route map from the registration form. Based on the route, it was clear that the run would not use Padang Merbok but will start and end at Dataran Merdeka," he said.

Rafizi expressed disappointment at the KL City Hall (DBKL) for its "inaccurate" statement on the use of Padang Merbok on June 23, saying it appeared as if City Hall was bowing to political pressure from Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN).

He said from his probe it was clear that Padang Merbok would be available for PR's #Black505 rally on June 22.

At a press conference yesterday, Ahmad had urged PR to select another venue for the rally, preferably a closed-door area like a stadium, claiming the field would be needed for "logistic preparations" for OCM's June 23 event.

The mayor also said holding the rally at the open, public venue would pose traffic concerns for motorists travelling along Jalan Parlimen, Jalan Kuching, Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin, Jalan Raja Laut, Jalan Raja and Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman.

He also said DBKL would not permit PR's rally as it needs to "protect" the landscape along Jalan Parlimen which, he said, is a "protocol road" that has been decorated with beautiful landscaping.

But Rafizi disagreed with all of Ahmad's concerns.

He said if the assertion by Umno and BN that peaceful gatherings should only be held in closed areas and not open, public spaces, the Peaceful Assembly Act should be changed to the "Peaceful Assembly in Stadiums Act".

He disagreed that holding rallies in stadiums would be more convenient for petty traders, pointing to the limited space at these venues.

Rafizi also said it made no sense to reject PR's rally bid to "protect" the landscaping along Jalan Parlimen, pointing out that the McDonald's Olympic Run covers an even bigger area and goes through areas near Parliament building.

He said traffic concerns should be used as a reason to reject the event as the run would lead to road closures in several areas.

"If the authorities can close the roads to facilitate the run, I am sure they can do the same for the #Black505 rally on June 22," he said.

Rafizi added that PR leaders will attend a meeting with Ahmad at 8am on June 14 but will not budge from its decision to stage the rally at Padang Merbok on June 22.

"What more now that there is proof that the field will not be used on that Saturday and Sunday," he said.

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