

**'Bad precedent' if Pakatan takes up stadium offer for rally, says Rafizi**  
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**By Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, June 14 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) is still insisting on using the Padang Merbok field here for its "Blackout 505" rally on June 22, with PKR's Rafizi Ramli saying that giving in to the authorities' suggestion of a stadium would set a "bad precedent" for future peaceful gatherings.

Rafizi said the people would want to exercise their right to freedom of assembly as long as it does not breach the Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA) 2012.

The Pandan MP said that having public gatherings in stadiums only would go against the principle of the PAA.

"I think that remains a critical point because if we were to accept the argument and also the precedent, that means there will be not be any other gathering in open, public spaces after this.

"It sets a very bad precedent," the PKR strategy director told reporters after a meeting with Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and the police.

According to Rafizi, no new points were raised in the meeting, with the authorities insisting that the opposition pact use a stadium instead of an open space, while PR still wants to use the field near the landmark Dataran Merdeka in the city centre here.

"It's still a deadlock. I think it's status quo," Rafizi said.

Rafizi said DBKL suggested that the rally be held at the Stadium Merdeka and Stadium Titiwangsa.

He also said PR had previously discussed opting for Stadium Merdeka but had in the end settled on holding it at Padang Merbok.

He also said DBKL listed down a few reasons in its objection to PR using Padang Merbok, including the field's intention for light sports and social activities, landscaping work and traffic concerns.

KL Mayor Datuk Ahmad Phesal Talib had on Monday urged PR to select another venue for the rally against electoral fraud, preferably a closed-door area such as a stadium, saying the field would be needed for "logistic preparations" for Olympic Council of Malaysia's (OCM) June 23 event.

The mayor had 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.

On Tuesday, OCM honorary secretary Datuk Sieh Kok Chi told The Malaysian Insider that logistics preparation for its June 23 Olympic Run in the city centre would start on June 21 after 3pm and June 22 after 6pm.

He had noted that runners will pass by Padang Merbok, although the run will be flagged off from Dataran Merdeka on June 23.

Sieh had said that the Olympic Run — which has been held annually on June 23 since 1994 in celebration of Olympic Day — would involve 15,000 runners and that the venue was booked at the end of last year.

Asked if he had contacted OCM, Rafizi said today that he had not done so but insisted it was still possible to hold the rally on June 22.

“We only need a co-ordinating meeting which we can do anytime,” he said.

He said the issue of the OCM event was not raised by both parties in the meeting, but pointed to the rally venue as the main issue instead.

Two PR leaders, PKR’s Datuk Johari Abdul and the DAP’s Fong Kui Lun, also attended the meeting they said was called by the city mayor.

The PR leaders said the pact’s leadership council will make a final decision on this matter.

PR has held “Blackout 505” mass rallies across the country since May 5 to protest against alleged vote-rigging in Election 2013 that saw the ruling Barisan Nasional retain power, despite losing the popular vote.

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