

#KitaLawan ride to protest against GST

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#KitaLawan protestors took to the streets of the capital Kuala Lumpur today, this time on bicycles to protest against the goods and services tax (GST) which came into force on April 1.

A group of about 20 protestors met at the starting point of the rally at Dataran Merdeka, ahead of the mass bicycle ride that was to begin at 4pm today, dressed in black, the protest movement's signature colour.

Only a few police officers were seen near the fountain at the square, where the cyclists had gathered.

#KitaLawan movement secretariat member Akmal Nasir had previously said today's protest was aimed at sports equipment which is taxed with the GST.

Today's protest is modelled after the cycling protest movement called "Critical Mass" which has become popular in Europe.

Upon arrival at Dataran Merdeka, Akmal told the cyclists gathered that this protest was aimed at asking Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin to get GST on sports equipment abolished.

Akmal said the protest route today would see the group cycling in a loop around part of the city to the Sogo shopping complex, then to the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) before ending at Dataran Merdeka.

#KitaLawan has been holding street demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur on some Saturdays since late February.

The earlier protests were aimed at freeing opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from prison, where he is serving a five-year sentence for sodomy, and to call for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's resignation.

The largest turnout at these rallies so far was on March 7, where estimates ranged from 5,000 to 10,000.

Unlike previous protests, however, no opposition politician or lawmaker was present today, and Akmal said the mass cycling protest was meant to be an event for youths.

Anwar's second daughter, Nurul Nuha Anwar, however, was present and told the crowd that she was representing the family today.

"I support this protest because the GST burdens the people," she said.

At 5pm, she joined the cyclists who shouted "Batal GST" (abolish GST) as they pedaled off.

The group quickly reached KLCC where it started to drizzle. The Malaysian Insider reporters followed on motorcycle.

A rally marshal directed the group on to the upmarket Bukit Bintang shopping area, as motorists gave way to the cyclists. Traffic was smooth and few police personnel in uniform could be seen.

There were no speeches made but the cyclists kept up their shouting and chanting of slogans as they pedalled.

Outside the Fahrenheit 88 shopping complex on Jalan Bukit Bintang, the cyclists paused to listen to the BangsArt music group singing "Rasa Sayang" with a twist to the lyrics to protest the GST.

They then unfurled a banner which read "Kayuh Bantah GST" (Cycling to protest GST) with Nurul Nuha outside the Grand Millennium Hotel building.

Heading back towards Dataran Merdeka, the group caused a small accident between two taxis whose drivers were watching the cyclists near Pudu Raya. Some other taxi drivers were seen giving the thumbs up, and a few passers-by clapped their hands in support of the protest.

Covering a distance of 13km, the cyclists reached Dataran Merdeka at around 6.15pm.

Akmal said #KitaLawan would hold protests in other states as well, including Pahang and Penang where by-elections in Rompin and Permatang Pauh, respectively, will be held next month.

He said the small turnout of cyclists today was not a damper, adding "we don't care for the numbers, but we care about the issues". – April 18, 2015.

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