

People have no choice but to take to the streets, says Ambiga
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The former leader of Bersih 2.0 has defended the movement's plan to press ahead with its rally in Kuala Lumpur and other cities ahead of the Merdeka celebrations this month, saying Malaysians have no choice but to take to the streets at a time when the country's institutions were falling apart.

"Malaysia is a country adrift. The government is failing us. The Election Commission is compromised. The rule of law is eroding," said Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan, writing in an opinion piece in The New York Times.

"The people of Malaysia must take to the streets to reclaim our democracy and the soul of our nation," said the lawyer, whose leadership of the electoral reforms coalition saw large-scale rallies in Kuala Lumpur previously.

In her opinion piece, Ambiga listed attempts to undermine the independence of the Election Commission, the latest of which she said was the controversial redelineation exercise in Sarawak, which goes to the polls soon.

"Once again, the people of Malaysia risk being cheated out of an election," she said, adding that a big win for Barisan Nasional (BN) in Sarawak would boost Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is at the centre of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal and revelations of billions of ringgit in his personal bank accounts.

Like in the past, authorities have urged the rally to relocate to a stadium, but the organisers are refusing to back down.

Bersih 2.0 chairman Maria Chin Abdullah (pic) instead said the rally could gauge public support for Najib.

The Bersih rally this time, its fourth since 2007, will be held for two days, with participants planning to set up camps near Dataran Merdeka, which Kuala Lumpur City Hall said would be closed to the public to accommodate Merdeka Day rehearsals.

Ambiga, meanwhile, had urged BN leaders to join the rally, saying it would reconnect them with the public.

"You have no idea what it is like to walk with the rakyat," said the lawyer-activist, who now heads the National Human Rights Society.

"It is empowering. You should come, if only to reconnect with us and see how we feel. You may not agree with all our demands but you will show that you nevertheless respect our right to gather and speak," she said. – August 22, 2015.

Source:

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