

Bersih 4 peaceful, successful due to police tolerance, says Nur Jazlan
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The Bersih 4 rally in Kuala Lumpur was peaceful because police were tolerant of the illegal gathering to ensure people's safety, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said today.

The overnight rally drew thousands of people from Saturday until last night at the capital city's iconic Dataran Merdeka, which was the venue for the National Day parade this morning.

"As I have said before, the police are tolerant. We didn't want the people to suffer because they fell for promises by some politicians," Nur Jazlan told The Malaysian Insider just before the National Day parade this morning.

"We allowed them to hold the rally, wearing banned marked shirts although it is illegal."

Nur Jazlan also disputed the numbers that turned up for the rally, organised by the coalition for free and fair elections Bersih 2.0, which said some 200,000 were at the weekend gathering.

"It is impossible to fit that many people in such a cramped area. They claimed high numbers but the estimates are lower.

"Don't be duped by politicians and activists who are actually politicians," said the deputy minister who was appointed to the job last month.

The Pulai MP was previously the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman before a shock Cabinet change on July 28 that saw Umno deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal lose their Cabinet posts.

The government had earlier warned the organisers that the Bersih 4 rallies held in Kuala Lumpur, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu were illegal and promised a crackdown for security reasons.

But the 34-hour rally went without any crackdown and only traffic police and City Hall wardens were on duty in the three cities. Both the rallies in Kuching and Kota Kinabalu ended after 24 hours.

Malaysia's first overnight street rally had ended this past midnight marked by surprise twists and many other firsts as organisers claimed hundreds and thousands of people turned up to call for the resignation of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

A large number of protesters slept on the streets of Kuala Lumpur on Saturday night while others slept in mosques and church compounds.

Hotels in the city were also fully booked for the gathering.

While most rally goers had come prepared for a police clampdown, complete with masks and salt water to neutralise tear gas, the rally proceeded smoothly and the lack of police presence was clearly apparent throughout the entire weekend.

The Home Ministry had banned any yellow clothing with the phrase Bersih 4 but most of those attending the rally ignored the ban, turning several streets around Dataran Merdeka into a sea of yellow.

Bersih 4 was a rally which demanded free and fair elections and a corrupt-free government.

Organisers said the turnout also served as a referendum on Najib's leadership, which has come under fierce criticism for links with the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal.

Participation in the weekend's rally, as is the case for all of Bersih's previous protests, was dominated by opposition politicians and civil society groups.

However, the Bersih 4 protest was missing the usual participation and large member turnout from Islamist party PAS, following a fallout with former opposition alliance partners, DAP and PKR. – August 31, 2015.

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