

Najib's reaction to Bersih 4 pathetic, says G25's Noor Farida
The Malaysian Insider
August 31, 2015
By Anisah Shukry

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's dismissal of Bersih 4 rally goers last night was pathetic and showed that he was in a state of denial over the extent to which Malaysians were unhappy with him, former diplomat Datuk Noor Farida Ariffin has said.

The group of prominent Malays, or G25, spokesman said Malaysians turned out in full force over the weekend to demand answers from the government, and he would do well to heed them instead of shrugging them off as "shallow-minded".

"It's really pathetic. If they are wise, they would listen to the people.

"But instead, they are in a sheer state of denial and accusing us of all sorts of things," said Farida, who had also attended the rally in her personal capacity.

"He made a speech so contrary to the facts of what was happening on the ground. They are just in total denial of reality.

"If I were him, I would listen to the people and really do something about accepting and instituting changes that the people are demanding."

During his Merdeka Day message last night, Najib said the rally was unwise, shallow-minded and showed a lack of national spirit.

He said the government rejected any form of street protests that disrupted public order, adding that it did not reflect maturity.

But Farida said today that instead of insulting the protesters, Najib and his administration should have been grateful that the thousands who gathered near Dataran Merdeka were peaceful.

She said the rally yesterday proved Malaysians were not interested in a violent overthrow of the government, but were merely voicing out their views.

Farida added that reports of a low Malay turnout were far from the truth, even though she conceded the Chinese made up the majority of the rally goers.

"There were more Chinese than Malays, yes, but it's not true there were no Malays at all.

"They came in full force. There were so many makcik, pakcik, youths – I took pictures with young Malay girls in tudung."

She said that the absence of rural Malays should not be interpreted as a sign that the

country's largest ethnic group supported Najib.

"Rural Malays couldn't turn up because they couldn't afford to. During previous rallies, PAS was involved, it put them in buses, brought them into the city.

"They can't afford the trip to Kuala Lumpur on their own, the overnight stay. It doesn't mean they are apathetic or don't care."

She said she was happy with the rally and the police's restraint, and declared it a success.

"What was so amazing was that people were so well-behaved and good-natured. There was very little police presence.

"In spite of the baking hot sun, people didn't lose their cool. They cheered, the mood was party-like – it was more like a carnival.

"Many of us couldn't even hear the speeches, but people cheered on anyway," said Farida with a laugh.

When asked whether her presence at the rally meant G25 wanted Najib to resign, Farida said she and other members of the group who attended were there in their personal capacity.

She added that she was there to demand answers from the government over the state of the country and the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal.

"We want answers. We are very unhappy with rapid endemic corruption, allegedly by our leaders.

"We are fed up with the loss of confidence in the ringgit, what is happening with the economy, we are concerned about 1MDB."

The two-day gathering, which ended last night, was not only to demand that Najib step down but also for institutional reforms. – August 31, 2015.

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