

PM Najib Expresses Worry over Imminent Clash between Protesters

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From Mokhtar Hussain

TOKYO, Nov 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has expressed concern over an imminent physical clash between 'Red Shirt' and 'Yellow Shirt' protesters during the planned Bersih 5.0 demonstration in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday.

"If one side wants to protest and the side that wants to protect the government is compelled to come out ... but I don't want any physical clash.

"Even the so-called Arab Spring was heralded as an era of change but, instead, it brought misery to the people who were involved," he said.

The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East in early 2011.

Bersih, which has yellow as its theme colour, is a movement calling for electoral reform in Malaysia, and has planned a rally for Saturday at Dataran Merdeka in the heart of Kuala Lumpur.

However, another movement, called the Red Shirts, alleges that Bersih is serving a foreign agenda to topple the current government and has threatened to hold a counter-rally at the same venue on the same day.

Malaysian Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor reiterated on Wednesday that Kuala Lumpur City Hall would not allow Dataran Merdeka to be used as the venue for the Bersih rally on Saturday.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists on Wednesday night at the end of his three-day working visit to Japan, Najib said the 'rakyat' (people) would be able to pick their choice of government when the general election is called.

"The best time is to decide when the time comes. There will be an election and people can make their choice and we will abide by the decision of the rakyat. And that's important," he said.

The next general election, Malaysia's 14th, will become due in June 2018.

Najib said any other way (of removing the present government) would be unconstitutional and would lead to chaos, as had happened in several other countries.

"You cannot indulge in any kind of physical clash at all. That's not going to be good for us and that's not the culture that we will want to be accepted as our way of life in Malaysia," he said.

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