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Hishamuddin's struggle had no clear goals

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - When Hishamuddin Rais returned to Malaysia in 1994 from his self-imposed exile overseas, he held a Press conference a week later at the headquarters of Bank Simpanan Nasional.

The event was organised by his long-time friend, former Umno Youth head Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is also the chairman of the bank. Hishamuddin and Zahid had apparently been close friends since their student days.

Seen often to be on the wrong side of the law and known as a rabble-rouser, Hishamuddin's so-called struggle, which began in Universiti Malaya in the early 70s had no clear objectives.

He had admitted that he had subscribed to socialist beliefs in the 1970s because it was an "in-thing" then.

The 48-year-old Hishamuddin had said: "I was influenced by the socialist movement and subscribed to its ideas and philosophies after reading books on the subject.

"At that time, if students were not radical in their thinking and did not oppose things like the US intervention in Vietnam, we were not regarded as knowledgable."

Between 1972 and 1974, Hishamuddin was responsible for organising and actively taking part in a number of illegal demonstrations concerning issues such as illegal clearing of land in Teluk Gong, squatters in Tasek Utara and famine in Baling.

He was also involved in a protest against the University and University Colleges Act 1971.

On Sept 19, 1974, Hishamuddin was arrested for obstructing the police in their duties at a demonstration against the demolition of squatter houses at Tasek Utara in Johor.

He was released on Sept 26 the same year on personal bond while awaiting trial on Feb 26, 1975. But he fled abroad to escape prosecution.

Hishamuddin was allowed to come back after two decades after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Home Minister, approved his unconditional return.

He graduated from the Film School of the Polytechnic of Central London, now the University of Westminster while in London.

Despite his qualifications, he has made only one directorial debut so far - for a movie, Dari Jemapoh Ke Manchester.

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