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`US is giving funds for reformasi rallies'

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KANGAR, Fri. - Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim today alleged that the United States was financing street demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur after being informed by its diplomats that two-thirds of Malaysians favoured the reformasi movement.

He said he had received information that the street demonstrators were funded by the US and by several local individuals and companies.

"We must expose the hands behind the current disturbances," he said while winding up the debate on an emergency motion he had tabled earlier at the State Assembly to condemn the speech by US Vice-President Al Gore at the recent Apec Business Advisory Council dinner.

The motion was also to re-affirm the State's undivided support to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in resolving the economic problems.

When approached later, Shahidan said he did not wish to add to his statement at the State Assembly.

The motion was unanimously passed.

Shahidan claimed he had obtained feedback that demonstrators were being paid to take to the streets.

"Several former prostitutes who participated in an illegal gathering in front of Istana Negara had admitted to being paid."

Shahidan said it was not difficult to see that the demonstrators were being orchestrated.

"They've the stamina and seem to be well-funded. Foreigners, including Indonesians and Filipinos, are taking part," he added.

"These elements cannot be that close to former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim that they're prepared to demonstrate voluntarily on his behalf."

On the US, Shahidan said the world's sole superpower had a history of meddling in other people's affairs, particularly Islamic countries, to ensure that they stayed within its sphere of influence.

"The US had made use of (former Indonesian President) Suharto to topple Sukarno. And Suharto was discarded when no longer useful."

Shahidan said the US also had a history of misreading situations in specific countries and was repeating the mistake with Malaysia.

"People must bear in mind that what is at stake now is the sovereignty of our nation.

"I'm glad that the opposition parties are with the Government in this case," Shahidan said, adding Gore was keen to become the next US President.

(END)