

'Patriot' rally to counter Bersih march
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While it looks like the streets of Kuala Lumpur are going to be filled to the brim with a sea of protestors wearing yellow shirts in support of electoral reforms on July 9, Umno Youth is hoping to bring out their own red shirts too.

What initially was an idea to counter the Bersih 2.0 rally, has since become an organised movement complete with a logo and a name for the Umno Youth led rally.

Unveiling the 'Patriot' rally on his personal Twitter account on Friday evening, movement chief Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar (right) also called for their group to wear red instead.

"Why 'Patriot'? I think the reason and rationale for the name is that we want to tell people that we're here to support the democratic system and the changes the Election Commission themselves are suggesting," he said.

Reiterating that the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) is tainted by oppositionist politics, Khairy said that they have stopped being a civil society non-partisan movement.

"It has become a very partisan, opposition-slanted, led even, movement with a political agenda," he said.

What then of a rally unashamedly organised by the youth wing of the largest political party in the country?

At least they made no bones that it is organised by Pemuda Umno, according to Khairy adding that the second Bersih movement is even more 'political' than the first one in 2007.

"(Bersih steering committee chairperson S Ambiga) and her committee have constantly appeared on the opposition platform. They never approached us. They never sat down with us, and ask if we could participate with them or they could participate with us.

But the Patriot rally will be different, as it claims to be "above that sort of deliberate antagonistic stand that Bersih is doing".

"We are also saying that it's led explicitly by Pemuda Umno to defend and support the electoral system and we make no bones about that. This is a stark contrast to a movement claimed to be led by civil society but in truth, the mobilisation is by political parties," said Khairy firing one salvo after another at Bersih.

Red is the colour of Umno

Calling on the Umno Youth supporters - who will also be joined by MIC Youth and PPP Youth members - to wear red come July 9, Khairy said that their movement will also hand over a petition to Istana Negara after their march.

The petition will state their support for constructive engagement with the Election Commission in spite of what Ambiga has said about having dialogues with the EC.

A former Bar Council president, Ambiga (left) had most recently commented that "the time for talk and discussion has passed".

"We're not faulting the EC to say that dialogue has failed. This is our show of support for engagement and defiance against Bersih," said Khairy.

"I am also representing the voice of Malaysians in defying Bersih," he continued, even if it meant coming

under Umno's red-coloured umbrella.

When asked if the red was chosen simply because it is the corporate colours of Umno, he agreed that the colour may have had roots in the party since they were organising it.

'Perkasa a non-issue'

Apart from the hundreds of thousands promised for the Bersih rally, Khairy may have to be on his toes for the other counter-rally organised by Malay rights NGO Perkasa.

However, he does not seem to be worried about them.

"Perkasa is a non-issue. They are non-value added and it's just one old fat guy," said Khairy, in obvious reference to the portly Perkasa president Ibrahim Ali.

Expecting 'tens of thousands' of his own members as well as his buddies in MIC Youth and PPP Youth, Khairy said that their own movement will be taking precautionary measures to avoid clashes.

"As for the skirmishes, it's for the police to sort out the crowd. It's not our responsibility. We'll take our own route.

"We have no intention of confronting them or fighting them but I'm sure there will be words exchanged.

"We will work with the police but I'm not going to call it off. No one in my Umno Youth exco has that intention, not one.

"Of course there will be precautionary measures but I can't guarantee that there will be no provocation from the other side," he said, adding that the jeering and taunting at them have even started on social media.