

BN didn't own Merdeka during my time, says Kadir
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Former information minister Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said the BN appeared to have taken possession of the independence day celebration which should be an impartial event.

"I can understand the disappointment over this year's independence theme which is 'Janji Ditepati' (Promises Fulfilled). This theme is clearly a BN slogan for the coming general election.

"It proves the government's ego and over-confidence in its position and that it had no concern for Malaysians as a whole. It is as if Merdeka has become the property of BN," he said in a statement yesterday.

Abdul Kadir, who had during his tenure as minister served as chairperson for the Merdeka celebration for seven years, said during his time, BN was careful to ensure that the celebration was neutral.

"From 1999 to 2006, the theme 'Keragaman Malaysia' was used for six continuous years because the theme was accepted by all Malaysian. As far as I know, the subsequent themes were also neutral even though they were changed every year," he said.

He added that during his tenure, he had personally invited opposition-led states and leaders to participate in the independence day celebration events and had received full support from them to make it a success.

"The Merdeka celebrations are a golden opportunity to strengthen unity among Malaysians. But this time, the opportunity has been thrown away because of the government's ego, arrogance and selfishness," he said.

Abdul Kadir further reminded the government that in the last general election it only gathered slightly more than half of the popular vote.

"Therefore it is wise that the government consider how to gather the support of the other half so as to allow everyone to celebrate independence," he said.

Abdul Kadir, who had resigned from Umno on March 19, has since formed his own party, Ikatan, and serves as its president.

Information, Communication and Culture Minister Rais Yatim, who is overseeing the Merdeka celebration this year, had brushed aside criticism of using a political slogan as an independence day theme, stating that it was a normal practice even in other countries.

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