

## **Dec 31 rally 'disrespectful' to New Year celebrations**

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The proposed rally at Dataran Merdeka tomorrow night protesting price hikes is "immature" and "disrespectful" towards the New Year's Eve celebrations by Malaysians, said Gerakan Youth chief Tan Keng Liang.

"It's irresponsible to hold such demonstration on New Year's Eve which would disrupt the celebration of New Year's Eve by those who wish to celebrate it peacefully," Tan (left) said today.

In a statement, he said that it would be "unfortunate" if the night's celebration were to end up in chaos.

He also used examples of the Bersih rally last year, saying that injuries to the public and media personnel should not recur tomorrow night.

"Thus, Gerakan Youth urges Pakatan (Rakyat) and the pro-opposition NGOs to cancel their proposed illegal demonstration.

"They should respect democracy and the decision made by Malaysians in the last general election," he said.

Meanwhile, in a separate statement, PAS deputy secretary-general Raja Ahmad Iskandar (right) said that Malaysia should take a leaf out of Thailand's book in dealing with mass protests by its own people.

"The democracy in Malaysia and Thailand is very different, even though that country seems to always be in an uncertain state - the reality is the people's rights are more respected there," he said.

"The Malaysian government must be ashamed, (that) a country perceived as not being peaceful is actually more peaceful than our country."

He reminded the government not to "take away the rights" of people who wish to express their disagreement with the government.

"Threatening the people in order to scare them is not a smart thing to do," he warned.

'We'll disperse peacefully'

In a separate statement, Turun chief Azan Safar, one of the main movers of the protest, reiterated that the demonstration tomorrow will be peaceful.

"The Dec 31 peaceful gathering is based on a 'sit-in' concept which proves that the rally will indeed be peaceful and the rakyat only want to voice out on the rising cost of living.

"The gathering is also free of provocation or threats that are against the law and federal constitution," he said.

He added that the protest will be a people's rally and politicians should only participate in their personal capacity.

He said protesters will gather in front of Sogo at 9pm and later move towards Dataran Merdeka for the sit-in, and will disperse peacefully on New Year's Day.

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