

'Father of demonstrations' Zahid says protests solve nothing

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Alyaa Alhadjri

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today said street demonstrations will not resolve any problems faced by the country.

He knows because he is "the father of demonstrations", he said.

The Umno vice-president was referring to his experience organising protests as a youth leader in the 1970s.

"Kampung Kerinchi was where I would hide when I was 'terrorising' the streets from 1973 to 1976," he said.

He was referring to the village in Lembah Pantai that is now part of the larger Bangsar South area.

"I would hide from the Federal Reserve Unit because every week I would be organising demonstrations," Zahid told the Lembah Pantai Umno division meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

Their protests, he said, would reach a point where even metal road dividers could be lifted up in order to escape the riot police.

Unfazed by Bersih

As such, he was unfazed when forced to deal with the series of Bersih rallies, including as Home Minister, he said.

"It is not that I want to insult them but I am the 'father of demonstrations'," said Zahid, referring to protestors who flooded the streets of Kuala Lumpur in a series of demonstrations.

Zahid said he had personally instructed police not to take action against protestors.

He is not the only senior Umno leader who had a history of leading demonstrations, he said.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Shahidan Kassim, who was also at the Lembah Pantai event, too, was a regular at street demonstrations in the 1970s.

"But that was when we were still angry youths, young souls... Now we are grounded in reality," said Zahid.

Zahid said they now realise that demonstrations cannot cater to the people's welfare.

"It must be translated into real efforts to help them, go down to the ground," he added.

Electoral watchdog group Bersih said it will hold another mega protest, following the United States Department of Justice filed a lawsuit to seize more than US\$1 billion of assets believed purchased using funds siphoned from 1MDB.

More than 100,000 people thronged central Kuala Lumpur at the Bersih rally last year which among others called for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's resignation amid corruption allegations.

Najib has denied using public funds for personal use while attorney-general Mohamed Apandi Ali has cleared the PM of wrongdoing.

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