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Bersih insists that Dr M did not hijack rally

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KUALA LUMPUR: Bersih 2.0 has dispelled talk that its rally had been “hijacked” by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who made a highly-anticipated appearance.

Bersih 2.0 steering committee member Dr Wong Chin Huat said the movement belonged to anyone who subscribed to its agenda.

“Bersih is a movement calling for institutional reforms – from clean elections, clean government, affirm-

ing parliamentary democracy, the right to dissent to the empowerment of Sabah and Sarawak.

“That agenda will not be taken away by anyone who comes in and yet does not pursue the same,” he told reporters here yesterday.

Bersih 2.0, said the activists, welcomed Dr Mahathir’s presence at the rally and believed that he brought more support to their cause.

“But, in no way, can he or anyone else derail Bersih’s struggle for institutional reforms. Anyone who wants to move away from the agen-

da of institutional reforms will be abandoned by Bersih supporters,” he added.

Bersih 2.0 deputy chairman Shahrul Aman Mohd Saari also disagreed with the notion that Dr Mahathir had “stolen the show”.

“Not in any way did we think he has hijacked the rally. Initially, he has very little chance of attending Bersih 5 because he has a conference with international leaders in Sudan that was planned a year ago.

“But he cut short his conference to rush back to make it on time for

the finale of Bersih 5. We appreciate his participation and that of all leaders who came regardless of political background,” he said.

Dr Mahathir’s presence at the rally had been criticised by some, including Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin who “congratulated” him for successfully making Bersih 5 his platform.

Bersih 2.0 also announced that Shahrul Aman would be the movement’s acting chairman in the absence of Maria Chin Abdullah, who had been arrested.

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