

Shafie: Umno gathering will prove assemblies need not cause inconvenience
TheStarOnline
May 08, 2012
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PETALING JAYA: The mass gathering to celebrate Umno's 66th anniversary on Friday will reflect not just the party's strength but will prove that peaceful assemblies even those by political parties are possible, vice-president Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal said.

He said Umno's decision to hold it at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil showed the party was responsible and considerate as it did not want to cause any inconvenience to the public.

"We could have this show at Dataran Merdeka if we wanted to but we are mindful not to disrupt the public. Our gathering will be a show of force but it will be held in a peaceful manner. Our members are disciplined," he said in an interview.

The gathering is expected to draw a crowd of at least 60,000 members.

Shafie said the celebration was also a reminder of sorts to Umno members of the party's struggle and to its opponents that it was still relevant and a party to be reckoned with.

In view of the pending general election, he said the gathering would be a good opportunity for party president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to stress on the importance of members rallying behind Umno and Barisan Nasional.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Mansor said the celebration, themed "Umno: The People's Champion", was chosen to remind its members of Umno's struggles.

"It is also to remind the *rakyat* that we have been championing them for the past 66 years and will continue to do so. They need not look elsewhere. We are here and are ready to serve," he said.

Umno veteran Tan Sri Rahim Tamby Chik said the celebration would be the time for its 3.4 million members to show solidarity, especially with the election looming.

"Umno is the country's pillar of political stability. The celebration will reflect the great role Umno plays in this," he said.

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