

Umno secretary says divisions only told to prepare for 'red shirt' rally
The Malaysian Insider
Sept 12, 2015
By Md Izwan

Umno executive secretary Datuk Ab Rauh Jusoh has denied directing anyone to join the September 16 "red shirt" rally, after a letter ordering party state representatives to meet in preparation for the rally was leaked to the media.

Rauf told The Malaysian Insider that the September 4 meeting he called was for Umno members to "just get ready" in the event that they were invited to join the protest.

But since party president Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced on September 9 he was not endorsing the rally, the meeting was now a moot point, said Rauf.

"It's already overtaken by events. We did it just to get ready, in case the organisers invite us to the rally," said Rauf, when asked about the letter.

"But since the organisers didn't invite us, it's not happening. I never asked anybody to join the rally."

Earlier today, The Malaysian Insider reported that representatives from state liaison committees were ordered to attend a meeting on September 4 to discuss arrangements for the rally, which will take place in Kuala Lumpur.

The letter was signed by Rauf and the meeting was held at Umno headquarters in Menara Dato Onn at 9am on Wednesday.

Three days ago, Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the party did not endorse the rally but would not stop members from attending it.

Sources within the party told The Malaysian Insider that several divisions have already sent lists of members for the gathering which is set to last 12 hours.

"Many divisions have confirmed that they will be sending members.

"The president's statement was confusing. Why did he say that Umno was not sponsoring the gathering but a special meeting had already been called to discuss it," said the sources.

The "red shirt" rally or "Himpunan Rakyat Bersatu" is said to be held to counter last month's Bersih 4 rally, which had called for Najib's resignation over alleged financial scandals.

The gathering is also being held to express anger over footage of Bersih 4 participants stomping on pictures of Najib and PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang.

Supporters plan to gather in Jalan Bukit Bintang for 12 hours, from noon on

September 16, which marks Malaysia Day. The rally has been declared illegal by police.

The rally's racial overtones have also created concerns that it would spark communal tensions. – September 12, 2015.

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