

'Red shirt' rally does not champion the Malays, says Dr Mahathir
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By KC Nazari

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has poured scorn over the "red shirt" rally planned for tomorrow, saying it did not champion the Malays and was meant to demonise the Bersih 4 rally as racist.

The "red shirt" rally, also called the Himpunan Rakyat Bersatu, is to be held in Kuala Lumpur tomorrow, which is also Malaysia Day.

Malaysia Day is a public holiday commemorating the country's formation in 1963.

"They say this rally is because the Bersih rally was racist. But the Bersih rally was not racist, every race was there together.

"So, they make Bersih racist, to show that they are championing the Malays. They are not fighting for the Malays, so there is no need for it," the former prime minister replied to reporters' questions in Kuala Lumpur today.

The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government has allowed one rally in Padang Merbok by a national silat group which the red shirt protesters said they will attend.

The Bersih 4 rally on August 29 and 30 was outlawed by the government on security concerns but it went ahead without any incident. Its organisers have been questioned by police after the 34-hour rally.

The martial arts group – National Federation of Silat Associations (Pesaka) – is organising the gathering dubbed the "red shirt" rally in Kuala Lumpur tomorrow.

The rally is reportedly to counter Bersih 4 last month, where the majority of participants were non-Malays.

The organiser also reportedly wanted to express anger over incidents during Bersih 4, where some participants stepped on the pictures of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang.

The "red shirt" rally organisers had previously invited Dr Mahathir, who is Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister, to the rally "if he thinks he is Malay".

They have claimed it is not a racist get-together, but critics have pointed out that they use slogans such as "kebangkitan maruah Melayu" (rise of Malay honour), which have communal sentiments.

After initially declaring it illegal, police have now allowed the "red shirt" rally to go on after organisers obtained permission from Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) to use Padang Merbok for the gathering. – September 15, 2015.

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