

'Red shirt' rally only to save Najib, not Malay dignity, say Umno grassroots

The Malaysian Insider

Sept 18, 2015

By Md Izwan

Several Umno grassroots members, disgruntled over the racially tinged "red shirt" rally on Wednesday, said the event was to help Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak maintain his grip on power and had nothing to do with upholding Malay dignity.

Speaking to The Malaysian Insider yesterday, they said the gathering was a front put up by Umno loyalists to show that Najib, who has been rocked by several scandals, still enjoyed the support of party members.

"At the same time, the rally was also to find a scapegoat for the troubles that Najib and the party are facing.

"Najib and his loyalists are trying hard to look for a scapegoat," Keliang Umno branch member Moohamad Faizal Abdul Raub said, referring to the attacks against opposition party DAP and the Chinese in general.

Najib is facing a backlash over the debt-ridden state investor 1Malaysia Development Bhd and the RM2.6 billion donation channelled into his personal bank accounts – which have caused many Umno members to withdraw support for the party president.

Najib had also come under fire from foreign anti-graft busters at the recently concluded International Anti-Corruption Conference in Putrajaya attended by 1,000 participants from 30 countries.

Faizal said the issues faced by Umno now were due to Najib's weak leadership and the financial scandals to which he is linked.

Rally organisers had earlier alleged that the gathering on Wednesday was to counter the Bersih 4 rally held over the Merdeka weekend and to uphold the dignity of Malays after several Bersih 4 rally goers were photographed stepping on the photographs of Najib and PAS president Datuk Seri Hadi Awang.

Umno Pokok Sena activist Ramli Yunos also agreed with Faizal that the rally was meant to defend Najib, saying other party leaders who turned up were known to as loyalists, including Datuk Ahmad Maslan and Tan Sri Annuar Musa.

"The NGOs there were also Barisan Nasional-friendly.

"They also support Najib although the rally got mired in issues related to race and Malay rights," Ramli said.

He said Umno's link to the rally could not be downplayed, going by the speeches given

by its leaders.

Umno Tenggara member Asrul Esreen Mohd Salleh said the rally was a front to show that Najib still enjoyed the support of his party, when the reality was that the grassroots no longer had faith in his leadership.

Asrul also questioned the rationale for the rally, saying the message it was trying to send out was not clear.

"The motive is not clear, is it for the Malays or for Najib?"

"Or for Jamal, the rally organiser," he said in reference to Datuk Jamal Mohd Yunus.

He said the rally had no benefits, suggesting instead if it were meant to show the strength of the Malays, they were better off congregating in prayer at the mosques.

"It has no benefit, if you really want to show the strength of the Malays, get together at the mosque and pray together."

Wednesday's "red shirt" rally, also called "Himpunan Rakyat Bersatu", by a coalition of Malay non-governmental organisations was to counter last month's Bersih 4 rally, which rally organisers claimed had insulted the integrity of the Malay race.

Filled with incendiary remarks and racially charged banners and placards, the rally saw some tense moments when participants were upset over questions posed by some journalists, and riot police sprayed chemical-laced water on a group of rowdy rally goers who attempted to breach the police barricades to gain access to Petaling Street.

Faizal decried the baseless racist remarks, saying that such actions could no longer influence the sentiments of the Malays, and instead said Umno supporters wanted their queries answered with facts and figures.

"Gen Y wants to talk with facts and figures. They don't want to go around in circles," Faizal added, referring to the Umno youth. – September 18, 2015.

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