

Group's actions backfire, tarnish image of UMS students — PKR leader

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KOTA KINABALU:

The Gempur Rasuah 2.0 demonstration held over the weekend has sparked public outcry after several students attempted to burn a caricature of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, a move that Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) Tuaran chief Razeef Rakimin has condemned as a "desperate stunt" to attract attention following poor turnout at the rally.

Razeef said while he and PKR Sabah fully support the constitutional right to peaceful assembly, the manner in which the protest was carried out had alienated many Sabahans.

"We've always supported the right of individuals and associations to demonstrate, as long as the cause is just," he said.

"From water supply protests to the original Gempur Rasuah, we've stood by them. Even

the police have said that such gatherings are allowed as long as the law is respected. But from the start, this group's tactics have been questionable."

According to Razeef, the use of sarcasm, excessive insults and personal attacks in their campaign strategy had turned the public off.

"Instead of gaining sympathy, they made people feel disgusted. Their approach was crude and offensive, and in the end, people stayed away," he said, noting that only around 50 to 80 participants turned up.

He added that during the first day of the protest, an incident occurred when a participant holding a banner calling for an investigation into a RM1.5 billion leak was harassed by fellow demonstrators despite the protest supposedly being against corruption.

"Even the police were

shouted at simply for asking to see identification. The officer was well within his right and handled the situation calmly despite the clear provocation," Razeef said.

The controversy escalated on the second day, when the group attempted to burn a caricature of the Prime Minister. Razeef criticised the act as misplaced and dangerous.

"They burned the wrong target. The Prime Minister recently approved RM3 million to fix UMS's water issues after listening to student complaints, and he didn't take a single sen from the project," he said.

"So why attack him? Why not target those actually accused of corruption?" Razeef stressed, adding that the stunt nearly ended in disaster when a student pouring petrol on the caricature was almost set alight after a fellow protester lit the

fire prematurely.

"This wasn't just about disrespect, it was a serious safety hazard. The incident happened near Gaya Street during a busy weekend, with tourists around. If something had gone wrong, it could've been catastrophic," he warned.

Razeef said the group's actions have backfired and tarnished the image of university students in Sabah.

"Corruption isn't part of our culture. But neither are extremism and vandalism. This kind of behaviour doesn't reflect the values of Sabahans or our student community," he stressed.

The protest, initially aimed at raising awareness about corruption and governance, has now shifted focus to questions of conduct, safety and political maturity among youth activists.