

Umno VP wants Utusan to continue as Malay voice
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Following the path of deputy prime minister and Umno deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin, Umno vice-president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has come out in support of the party's mouthpiece Utusan Malaysia, describing the Malay daily as "the Malay voice".

Despite the attacks from various parties, Zahid (right) insisted that Utusan should continue to express the Malay community's pulse and thought as long as it does not sideline the rights and interests of other communities.

This is because the issue of Malays is still relevant today, he said.

"Many national agendas to develop the Malays have yet to achieve their targets. Thus, Utusan should not hesitate at the junction just because of attacks from people who are not comfortable with the Malay voice."

The defence minister lent his support to the beleaguered Malay daily in his opening speech at the annual general meeting of the Utusan Melayu Veterans Club held at Taman Melawati in Selangor last Sunday (April 24).

Zahid's full speech was published by the daily today, under the heading, "Utusan is not a racist newspaper".

Utusan had come under fire after its columnist Zaini Hassan called for a '1Bumi 1Malay' campaign following the Sarawak state election of April 16, which he claimed had enabled the DAP to unite the Chinese politically.

Despite criticism from opposition parties and moderates, including MCA, which called for a boycott of the newspaper, Malay rights NGO Perkasa and Muhyiddin have expressed their full support for Utusan.

Muhyiddin said the daily has been the voice of the Malays and Malaysians in conveying the people's views on various issues.

In his speech, Zahid noted that prime minister and Umno president Najib Razak had commented that several issues raised by the daily were merely personal opinions of the editors and did not reflect government stance.

'Utusan is our voice'

"But Utusan's voice is our voice, it is the general voice of the Malays, the voice of Malays' pulse and thought."

He argued that Utusan should not be apologetic for championing the interests of the Malay community.

"There were other media and newspapers that published certain racial issues, but why they were not seen as chauvinist?"

"If other people raise issues relating to their race, we are not angry, but why do they accuse us of racism when we raise issues relating to our race?" he asked.

Zahid, a former Utusan Malaysia journalist, urged those who liked to label the Malays as racist to look at the tolerance the community showed other races.

"Just look at the success of Chinese who stay in Malay villages, their livelihood and business succeeded

because of the assistance given by the Malays. But, how many Malays in the Chinese-majority new villages managed to thrive?

"Were they given help? I'm not raising racial sentiments, but this is something we should ponder. Is it because of our tolerance that we should continue to be marginalised?"

Failed in championing Malay rights

Zahid also lamented that a "political movement" had failed the expectations of Malays to champion their rights.

"In the past, maybe some of us pinned our hope on a political movement, but the political movement no longer voices out the Malays' thought. They were vocal once but now have turned liberal.

"I don't think they are still brave enough to take action in protecting Malay rights," he said, without naming the political movement.

Zahid was Umno Youth chief in the 1990s. The movement used to be a pressure group in upholding Malay rights, but now, under the leadership of current chief Khairy Jamaluddin, it is seen as more moderate and liberal.