

## **'Ketuanan Melayu politicised to destroy Malay rights'**

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**By S Pathmawathy**

Ketuanan Melayu or Malay supremacy is "purposely being blown out of proportion" by certain parties for political mileage, Defence Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said today.

"They purposely make it an issue to destroy the special rights of the Malays," Ahmad Zahid said, with the hope that there would no longer be advantages or priorities for the Malays.

"What they want after this is equality, or to be fair and square. When this situation manifests, as we all already know, the Malays and the bumiputera will not have achieved their targeted successes.

"In the end, who will rake in the profits?" he posed in his speech at the launch of Utusan Malaysia columnist Ridhuan Tee Abdullah's latest books, *Masih Adakah Ketuanan Melayu?* and *Cabaran Saudara Baharu di Malaysia* at the Defence Ministry.

Quoting former prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, Ahmad Zahid noted that every other race living in the country had accepted that this country "is originally a Malay country".

Ketuanan Melayu, he said, was "still relevant" if it was aimed at improving the lifestyle of the Malay community as a whole.

"It is not to benefit a certain portion until it creates dissatisfaction among others. If not, Ketuanan Melayu will not only be rejected by non-Malays but by the Malays themselves," he said.

Ahmad Zahid denied that the much-contested terminology propagates the concept of "master and slave" in society, citing an explanation drawn from former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He quoted Abdullah as saying that "Malay supremacy is not about the Malays being in a position to dominate, rule over and force their power upon others".

Ahmad Zahid added: "Writers think the Chinese understand the true meaning of Malay supremacy, but deliberately politicise it to gain political mileage, especially among their leaders."

Importance must be given to religion

The clamour surrounding the concept of Ketuanan Melayu resurfaced after the opposition made record-breaking inroads in the 2008 general election, raising fears that the political and economic future of the Malays would come under threat.

Ridhuan Tee, on the other hand, holds the view that in protecting Islam, the rights of the Malay community must also be equally protected.

"As an academician and writer, when I embraced Islam 26 years ago, I began to understand that when there is clash between race or religion, like it or not, the importance must be given to religion," said Ridhuan Tee, an ethnic Chinese.

He pointed out that since the federal constitution states that the Malays profess Islam, he had "no choice" but to place himself among those in the Malay race as well.

"In my understanding, when there is a clash between the importance of race and the importance of religion, like it or not, Islam taught me that religion must take priority," he said, adding that his book touched on the standing of Ketuanan Melayu.

Citing observations, he said the non-Malays found it "very difficult" to accept the national education system. On the contrary, the Malay community "accepted" vernacular schools that "condone the lifestyles and education system that are not related to the Malay community".

"I don't have any other choice but to place myself among them.

"That is why when I'm writing, I'm faced with the bitter truth that there is a clash between my own race and other races and another big issue is Islam," said Ridhuan Tee, adding that the non-acceptance made him "angrier".

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