

Zahid: We serve all despite 'ultra-Malay' label
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Newly-minted Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi deflected perceptions today that he is an 'ultra-Malay', saying he is capable of serving all races as the country's number two in government.

"I hope those who have negative perception that we are ultra-Malays, just as our leaders in the past have been labelled, (will see that) the leaders ended up doing the best for all the rakyat in the country," he said in an interview with Berita Harian.

Zahid said the perception that he was only a leader for the Malays likely stemmed from his uncompromising stance.

However, he said, some people failed to see that while he championed the rights of Malays, other communities in the country were not left out.

"I am not only a champion of the Malays, but also for Islam, which is compatible with the concept of a multi-racial society in Malaysia.

"We cannot run away from being just to all quarters without neglecting the Malay and the Islamic agenda," said Zahid, who also retains his Home Ministry portfolio.

He added it was natural for race-based political parties to focus on their own race, but this was not at the expense of the national agenda.

Even though he was seen as being a tough home minister, he had always been colour blind in his actions.

Zahid replaced Muhyiddin Yassin as deputy prime minister on Tuesday, after Muhyiddin was dropped for criticising Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's handling of the 1MDB scandal.

Zahid said he believes Muhyiddin can still contribute to Umno without a government position, just as he himself had done so when he was without a government post as Umno Youth chief in the past.

He attributed his appointment as deputy prime minister to his capability to be a team player with Najib, citing his past experiences working with the prime minister.

"I would be a failure if I still cannot read what is in Najib's mind, and he would also be disappointed if the person he trusts cannot understand his heart," Zahid told the Umno-linked daily.

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