

**Dr M to Umno: I can influence Perkasa**  
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today hinted that he still wields much political clout by virtue of his position as patron of Malay rights pressure group Perkasa.

"I have decided that the NGOs have a big enough following which could do damage to Umno and the BN in the next election if they want to.

perkasa first agm 270310 keris 03"Accordingly I have decided to stay close with Perkasa especially and to ensure that it does not swing over to the opposition. I would like to ensure that Perkasa supports BN in the next election," wrote Mahathir on his blog today.

Mahathir's article comes in the wake of calls for inclusiveness by top Umno leaders and reassurances on Malay rights during the party's recent annual general assembly.

Umno president Najib Abdul Razak proclaimed then that the special position of the Malays as outlined under Article 153 of the federal constitution was virtually secure.

Najib argued that even with a two-third majority in Parliament, Article 153 cannot be amended without the consent of the Council of Rulers and hence debates on the provision were pointless.

This had led observers to conclude that Najib's statement was aimed at defusing groups such as Perkasa, which claimed that the position of the Malays were under threat by non-Malay groups demanding meritocracy and equality.

Umno and BN in 'bleak' situation

Mahathir argued that Umno cannot risk ignoring Malay groups because many seats won by BN in the 2008 general election were won by a small margin and a minute swing towards the opposition may cost BN the federal government altogether.

chedet mahathir blog 210508"The situation of Umno and BN looked bleak. They have not regained the Malay support lost in the 2008 elections and they face the prospect of the Chinese not supporting the Barisan Nasional in the 13th general election.

"Striving to regain Chinese support is not enough. They must also regain Malay support. Umno may think that all the Malays are supportive of the party. But Umno cannot be sure of that. Their silence before the 2008 election was deceptive.

"We now know that many supported the opposition. Can Umno disregard or antagonise any Malay group? I think it would be dangerous to do so," he reasoned.

Mahathir argued that Chinese and Indians began actively challenging pro-Malay policies during the fifth prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's administration, which he described as weak.

Najib made things worse

This had caused Malay anxieties because their rights were being challenged without any

reply from Abdullah and Umno and exacerbated further after Najib Abdul Razak took the reins, said Mahathir.

"Najib took over and he tried to regain Chinese support by apparently giving in to Chinese demands on several issues. The new Umno leadership also opted to remain silent and failed to defend the Malay position.

"Instead of going back to support Umno, Malays including Umno members continue to flock to Perkasa," he said.

perkasa protest against namewee at klscah 280910 frontMahathir also defended allegations by some Umno and most opposition leaders that Perkasa was a "racist" organisation.

"Is Perkasa racist? If anyone cares to study the statements by Perkasa he will not fail to note that it has confined itself to rebutting allegations that the non-Malays have been discriminated against, that the Malays need to retain their present position.

"If it is really racist then it would be demanding the abolition of the special treatment of the Chinese and Indians in Malaysia. This it has not done except when defending the Malay position," wrote Mahathir.

He said that it was illogical for Malays to remain silent or agree with Chinese and Indian activists who demand the removal of policies and schemes designed to help the Malays.

"Surely the natural thing for them to do is to defend themselves. If their anointed protector, Umno, refuses for whatever reason to voice disagreement against the demands of the Chinese and Indians, then the beleaguered Malays will have to find a champion elsewhere," he said.

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