

A power struggle in the offing
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COMMENT Prime Minister Najib Razak and his team seem to have drawn a clear line with Malay rights group Perkasa.

But how about Umno?

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Nazri Abd Aziz and Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin have condemned Perkasa earlier and Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan Mansor has also said last week that Perkasa has affected the support of non-Malay for the BN, and Umno does not support Perkasa.

If you think it is still not clear enough, Adnan has even claimed that Umno is going to contest for the Pasir Mas parliamentary seat in the next general election to challenge its MP Ibrahim Ali, who is the Perkasa president.

Ibrahim was elected the MP for Pasir Mas in the March 2008 general election, contesting with a PAS ticket. He, however, has now turned vigorously against PAS which had helped him win the seat, after Umno dumped him.

Ibrahim had set up Perkasa and claimed to have received support from Umno. The words and practices of Perkasa are similar to the Umno right-wing faction.

His strategy worked and he has inspired some leaders of the Malay community, stirred sensitive sentiments, strengthened conservative and radical ideas and grabbed the headline with racist statements.

The Umno right-wing is also happy to have him performing the role for it.

Ibrahim and the Umno right-wing are using each other to get what they want.

The Umno right-wing uses Ibrahim to pressure Najib while Ibrahim uses the Umno right-wing to expand influence. He also hopes to contest for the parliamentary seat under the Umno banner in the next general election and march into the mainstream of Umno.

Everything is proceeding smoothly, but there are two unresolved problems.

First, Ibrahim and Perkasa have caused discrepancy in the BN. The non-Malay communities have big reservation about Perkasa. As a result, the MCA, MIC, Gerakan and other BN component parties from Sabah and Sarawak are pressuring the BN and Umno leadership to keep a distance from Perkasa.

Meanwhile, the liberals and progressives in the Malay community also dislike Perkasa. This has indirectly driven them closer to PAS and the PKR.

Secondly, the amendment of some unreasonable policies in the New Economic Policy (NEP) has been included in the reform agenda of Najib. Also, liberal policies, which are opposed by Perkasa, has been gradually implemented.

The criticisms against Perkasa by Nazri, Khairy and Adnan, as well as Najib's emphasis in

reform through international media such as the *Times* magazine and the CNBC Asia, have shown the intention of Najib and his team to get rid of Perkasa.

However, other Umno dignitaries, including some key figures, have yet to make clear their stands so far.

On the contrary, the *Utusan Malaysia* has published articles supportive of Ibrahim and Perkasa while criticizing some reforms made within the party.

It is a very unusual situation for an Umno newspaper to actually take such an opposing stand. Surely there must be a strong force behind the scene.

All signs point to a brewing power struggle within Umno. — *MySinChew.com*

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