

**After Umno attacks, Pakatan says must assuage 'Malay fears'**  
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**By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal**

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 14 — Admitting that Umno's attacks can affect the opposition's Malay support base, Pakatan Rakyat leaders (PR) have said they will focus on alleviating fears that the dominant community's rights would be at risk under their rule.

Top PR leaders who spoke to The Malaysian Insider said more needed to be done to create awareness among the Malays on how the pact's four states implemented policies that "empowered" the community, as well as a guarantee the community would not be sidelined.

Umno intensified its attacks against the opposition two weeks ago through its general assembly that saw delegates and leaders accusing PR of being anti-Malay and Islam.

"Umno is reverting back its age old policy of Malay agenda which has enabled it to maintain its traditional support base in the past. But Pakatan has not done enough to alleviate these Malay fears, despite how untruthful it is," Nurul Izzah Anwar told The Malaysian Insider.

"Our message needs to be carefully catered to address Malay fears stemming from the use of politics of fear and race that the Umno-BN is currently using against us."

The PKR vice-president said Malay support for PR has been noticeably affected since Umno's renewed attacks, and that PR's ceramah circuit was a way they could counter the "baseless" accusations.

"Pakatan has policies, like in Penang for example, where 70 per cent of contracts go to deserving Bumiputera contractors based on an open tender system. We have these policies implemented but we need to address them, keep repeating it and remind people during ceramahs, perhaps through leaflets.

"More often than not, politics is about perception," she said.

Liew warned that PR should compete with Umno's race-centric approach. One of the most common misconceived notions about PR, said Nurul Izzah, was that Malay rights and privileges would be in jeopardy should they take over Putrajaya.

"We reiterate our commitment to defending the Articles spelled out in the Federal Constitution, including maintaining and protecting the special position of the Malays... I believe the policies enshrined in our Common Policy Framework (CPF) address the problems faced by many Malaysians, especially focusing on alleviating the poor — most of whom include Malays.

"Steps proposed such as minimum wage legislation, focusing on and strengthening vocational and technical institutions, as well as returning the independence of various institutions to ensure we tackle graft, corruption and abuse of power accordingly, are crucial in changing current economic conditions and improving the overall welfare of the rakyat — Malays included," said the Lembah Pantai MP.

She said this issue was an "on-going agenda" but became more important in light of the

upcoming election.

PKR secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution agreed, saying coalition is already taking steps to counter Umno's claims.

"We are telling people in rural areas, many of whom are Malays, that Pakatan promotes a system of governance which will ensure fairness to all communities and, at the same time, empower Malays.

"I am hosting a special briefing at my place, I have invited 400 people — imams, religious scholars, community leaders and distinguished individuals — for a post-parliamentary session so that I can address all the concerns and counter all the lies," he told The Malaysian Insider last night.

The Machang MP said among issues to be discussed during the briefing are those raised during the Umno assembly as well as recently-passed Peaceful Assembly Bill.

Another PR lawmaker said, however, that a delicate balance was needed when addressing the concerns about PR empowering the Malays.

DAP Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong stressed that the "message" that PR sent to voters was important, and that they should not "compete" with Umno in becoming "racial-centric."

"We need to recognise that the demographics have changed. There are now more Malays living in urban areas. We need to stick to bread-and-butter issues, and explain how we can help improve the lives of all Malaysians.

"We need to explain how our policies can bring about a positive change across the board for everyone, but at the same enabling the Malay community to be empowered," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Umno sounded the alarm a fortnight ago, warning that only Barisan Nasional would ensure that Islam remains an important aspect within the government administration.

Party delegates had cited events such as claimed proselytisation of Muslims since Election 2008, when PR took power in five states, as proof that the faith among Malays would be in jeopardy.

Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak recently warned the future of Malays would be in doubt if his ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) does not remain in power after a general election expected soon.

He had said if the Umno-led BN lost power, "all our ambitions will be buried and our future will be full of darkness."

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