

**Muhyiddin says no one sidelined under BN**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KAJANG, Dec 26 — Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin denied today the Barisan Nasional (BN) government had sidelined any group, after the Church and Malay rights group Perkasa clashed over whether Article 153 of the Constitution safeguarded the rights of all communities.

The deputy prime minister told thousands at the government's Christmas open house here that the Najib administration "does not look at your background, religion or race" in formulating policy.

"No one is sidelined. All enjoy efforts to develop the nation," the Umno deputy president said.

National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) chairman Reverend Dr Eu Hong Seng said on Saturday Article 153 is akin to "bullying" if it only protects the rights of one group.

But Perkasa responded by saying the Article helped keep the country peaceful, further claiming that the race riots of May 13, 1969 happened because it was not implemented properly.

"This country is peaceful because of Article 153 which protects the rights of Bumiputeras who are the majority in this country.

"The reverend needs to remember that Christians are able to practise their religion without worry in this country because of Article 153," Perkasa secretary-general Syed Hasan Syed Ali said.

Muhyiddin added today national unity has been strengthened in the 54 years since independence due to BN's power-sharing concept that is based on a common understanding between the various races and religions.

The Pagoh MP cited the RM2 billion to be handed out to all households earning less than RM3,000 a month under Budget 2012 as an example of "how we give equal treatment without looking at your background, race or religion."

Article 153 states that "it shall be the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article."

The provision in the Federal Constitution has been repeatedly invoked by Malay right-wing groups who insist on the continuance of pro-Bumiputera affirmative action.

These include quotas in education, scholarships, business equity and employment in the public sector.

But constitutional expert Prof Abdul Aziz Bari said yesterday this meant "the King must also

make sure that (safeguarding Bumiputeras) must not be done at the expense of the legitimate interests of other communities.”

Muhyiddin also said today religious leaders were welcome to air their views and suggestions for the benefit of the nation.

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