

Najib says Perkasa's 'white packet' fiasco nothing to do with his government
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 31 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak has distanced his administration from Perkasa's Chinese New Year "white packet" faux pas, pointing out that the leader of the Malay rights NGO, Datuk Ibrahim Ali, is an independent lawmaker.

According to Perkasa, the Pasir Mas MP had handed out white packets, which Chinese usually use at funerals, at the group's Chinese New Year open house on Sunday after running out of traditional ang pow (red packets).

But the move caused an uproar among Malaysians online and also drew fire from the MCA and Gerakan, coalition partners in Najib's ruling Barisan Nasional (BN).

"Ibrahim Ali (picture) is an independent MP. As such the Chinese New Year function where white packets were distributed should not be seen as something that was condoned by the government," the prime minister was quoted in the Chinese media today as saying in a posting last night on his new Chinese-language "Ah Jib Gor" Facebook page.

He added that the controversy over the white packets handed out at Perkasa's Chinese New Year open house on Sunday could be avoided with a "deeper understanding and increased sensitivity to cultural taboos of Chinese culture."

But his Facebook message has drawn mixed responses in the 160 comments posted there at the time of writing, with some calling for action to be taken against Ibrahim.

Some comments said that the government was not taking action against Ibrahim because the independent lawmaker was pro-BN.

The opposition and critics of Najib's efforts at being more inclusive under his 1 Malaysia banner have repeatedly accused Umno of "outsourcing" hardline pro-Malay rhetoric to groups like Perkasa.

"Ah Jib Gor", meaning "Elder Brother Najib," went online on January 16 and has since gained over 21,000 followers.

Najib said the incident was a learning experience for race relations in Malaysia.

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