

Government, not freedom, responsible for race problems, Kadir tells Dr M
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By Ida Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, June 29 — Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir today pushed for greater media freedom, disagreeing with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's view that liberalisation has caused Malaysians to be more race conscious.

Dr Mahathir had earlier this month warned Datuk Seri Najib Razak that his attempts to increase civil liberties would lead to extremism.

Abdul Kadir, an information minister during Dr Mahathir's tenure as prime minister, disputed the former prime minister's claim that liberalisation had caused "more antagonism between the races".

"In fact in my view Najib's liberalisation programme seems to be more cosmetic than anything real," said Abdul Kadir, adding that the prime minister should start by "freeing our very tightly controlled mainstream media."

"In fact, the government is solely responsible for the deterioration in race relations and the rising racial and religious tension," he said.

He accused the ruling party of "playing the racial and religious card" to regain voter support, which he says appears to be its "solution to cling on to power."

"The whole thing started after the 2008 general election when the rakyat (people) of all races sent the strongest signal that they wish to reject the Barisan Nasional (BN) government."

The former Umno man slammed the "BN-controlled mainstream media" where he said racial and religious issues "are highlighted and exaggerated all the time and in such a way to further stoke anger and ill-will between the various races."

He said "statements and opinions expressed to correct or cool down the situation... were not reported."

"Our ordinary rakyat have become responsible enough and have grown to love each other enough as to not misuse any genuine liberalisation to their detriment," said the president of Ikatan, a newly-launched political party.

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