

**Changing national flag not on Pakatan agenda, say leaders**  
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**By Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders denied today claims they had mounted a campaign to replace the national flag with an alternative design and denounced the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government for spinning “lies” against the federal opposition bloc in the run-up to national polls.

The DAP-PKR-PAS alliance has been put on the defensive following public uproar over an incident during the recent Independence Day countdown in Dataran Merdeka here last Thursday where individuals were spotted waving flags of indeterminate design other than the Jalur Gemilang — which were then alleged to be an alternative national flag.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had yesterday linked the incident to the opposition bloc and accused them of masterminding a plan to change the national symbol, among other national institutions if they win power at the 13th general elections due soon.

“The change of the national flag (sic) is never a Pakatan Rakyat agenda and has never been discussed or raised in any Pakatan Rakyat meeting,” DAP Parliamentary Leader Lim Kit Siang told The Malaysian Insider when contacted.

The Ipoh-Timur MP slammed the PM and his Cabinet for making such unsubstantiated remarks, which he described as a “completely concocted” and “artificial issue”.

Najib’s remarks were also echoed by several Umno federal ministers, including Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein who was reported today to have called on the police to hasten their investigations and book the perpetrators for attempting to incite hatred against the government.

“The majority of the people are already fed up with the actions of these political desperados who know they are facing defeat in the coming general election and are trying to create public hatred against government leaders,” Hishammuddin was quoted as saying today by state news agency Bernama, after opening the Merbok Umno division delegates’ meeting at Dewan Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Merbok in Kedah.

Lim said the remarks showed the ruling BN coalition was “desperate” as the electoral race to win over non-partisan voters tightened.

“I call for an end to such lies and falsehood,” he said, adding that the statements were part of the BN and Umno’s “tactics” to “scare, frighten and mislead the people.”

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar expressed similar sentiments, saying “all the allegations are false and have been officially responded to by the PR leadership.”

She accused Najib, who is also Umno president and BN chairman, of “employing the use of malicious lies in challenging his political opponents.”

“Additionally, there was not an iota of evidence that was used to back up his malicious lie.

"It is also distracting if the PM can only lend his voice in regards to our flag yet silent on more important matters such as corruption, political violence, statutory rape, high crime rate, statistics manipulations and so on [sic]," she said in a text message to The Malaysian Insider.

PKR secretary-general Datuk Saifuddin Nasution Ismail urged Najib to stop making such statements, saying that "his position as prime minister is not licence for him to accuse without evidence."

PAS secretary-general Datuk Mustafa Ali also denied the allegations, saying: "That is not our policy. That is not the policy of PR."

He also called the act of carrying the alternative flag design "unacceptable", saying that the "authorities should investigate who is responsible... and take proper action."

The BN's mandate expires next April, prompting the automatic dissolution of Parliament if general elections are not called earlier.

The two political blocs have been engaged in an intense battle for Putrajaya after the ruling coalition lost its customary two-thirds control of Parliament in the last election four years ago, and giving hope to the opposition that it may break the BN's grip after 49 years in government.

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