

Perkasa is outsourced by Umno, says Anwar
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PETALING JAYA, Jan 25 — Perkasa can get away with racial slurs and religious insults because it is backed by Umno, Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim alleged today.

Malay rights group Perkasa and its president Datuk Ibrahim Ali have been playing up racial and religious issues as Election 2013 looms, without any rebuke from the government or the ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN).

“(Perkasa) is an organisation outsourced by Umno to fend racist and religious bigotry at the behest of Umno,” Anwar **(picture)** claimed here.

During Perkasa’s convention in Penang last weekend, Ibrahim had urged Muslims to unite and burn all Malay-language bibles that contain the word “Allah” and other religious words in Arabic script.

“We have not yet found a tough response by the Umno leadership nor the prime minister, nor the home minister,” said Anwar.

“This is, to me, disturbing ... you may have differences between PKR and Umno, Pakatan Rakyat and BN, but you have to draw the line.”

Anwar said that parties on both sides of the political divide can continue their political battles, but should never resort to defending racial and religious bigotry.

On Wednesday, Anwar had called for Muslims nationwide to condemn Perkasa’s threat to burn all Malay-language bibles.

The opposition leader, a Muslim, said those who profess Islam and claim to protect “Allah” and the Quran should also defend their faith and morals by preventing the spread of racial insults, which were discouraged by the religion.

Yesterday, Perkasa insisted that its president’s words were actually a “wake-up call” to prevent possible violence against distributors of bibles containing the word “Allah” and other religious words in Arabic script.

The group’s secretary-general, Syed Hassan Syed Ali, said Perkasa was merely protecting Islam and its position, as enshrined in the Federal Constitution, and this included rejecting those who insult the religion and who try to spread their own faiths to Muslims.

Ibrahim’s remarks had immediately sparked furore among Christians and politicians across the political divide and invited calls on the government to cite him for sedition.

The “Allah” dispute, which first erupted after the watershed Election 2008, remains a hot-button topic in the run-up to this year’s polls.

Debate resurfaced last month after DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, who is also the Penang chief minister, called on Putrajaya in his Christmas message to lift a ban on Malay-language bibles in Borneo Malaysia.

Hot on the heels of the DAP leader's remarks, several state Rulers and Islamic religious authorities reminded non-Muslims of state laws banning use of the word despite conflicting with a 2009 High Court judgment that ruled "Allah" was not exclusive to Islam.

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