

**Field Ibrahim Ali for GE13 contest, Dr M tells BN
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 6 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Barisan Nasional (BN) today to field Datuk Ibrahim Ali under its banner in Election 2013 and even offered to campaign for him, saying Malaysia needs more individuals like the controversial Malay rights leader.

The former prime minister said Ibrahim's right-wing group is a force to be reckoned with, as it boasts a membership of over 400,000.

"Maybe even larger than PAS," he said at a press conference today after attending a Perkasa gathering at SMK Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah in Shah Alam this afternoon.

Continuing his high praise for Ibrahim, Dr Mahathir pointed out that Perkasa had not been founded as a political party to stand in the polls but to show its support or BN, its leader and prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and the 1 Malaysia concept.

Ibrahim (gambar), he added, is the sort of person who deserves support as he does nothing for self-gain.

"I hope BN will give Ibrahim Ali a spot. If he is made a candidate, I will go to Pasir Mas to campaign," he pledged.

"If we have more individuals like Ibrahim Ali, Malaysia will be safe."

Dr Mahathir's close affiliation with the firebrand Malay leader Ibrahim has oftentimes earned Umno criticism for its alleged link to Perkasa, which is known for its hardline Muslim stance.

But the country's longest-serving prime minister has never kept his apparent liking for Ibrahim a secret, despite the many accusations claiming that Perkasa was the conscience of Umno, formed to hold the ideological ground of the original party.

It has often been said as well that Perkasa's controversial existence and declaration as BN's staunch supporters was to help Umno keep its support of Muslim hardliners, many among whom have grown critical of the new leadership's more liberal stance.

But Ibrahim, with his no-holds-barred attitude, has often run afoul the country's non-Muslim communities with his racially-charged remarks, such as his recent suggestion to burn Malay-language Bibles containing the word "Allah".

When Ibrahim made the suggestion, Dr Mahathir had come to the former's rescue to explain that the Perkasa president was merely referring to the common practice of burning publications that have been identified as illegal.

"Usually, if there is a publication that has been banned, the action taken is to burn these books.

"So his (Ibrahim) view is that if this Bible is illegal in terms of policy, he chose to opt for the common method of burning them," he had said at a press conference,

"So I don't think that he (Ibrahim) had any intention to insult the kitab injil... it was not his intention."

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