

BN yields Pasir Mas to Ibrahim Ali in sly nod to Dr M
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 — Barisan Nasional may not have fielded Datuk Ibrahim Ali in Pasir Mas but the coalition made life easier for the Perkasa president — endorsed by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad — by allowing him to face PAS's Nik Abduh Nik Abdul Aziz without distraction.

Ibrahim and Nik Abduh were the only two candidates to submit their nominations for the federal constituency this morning, after BN nominee Che Johan Che Pa failed to turn in his papers.

Perkasa patron Dr Mahathir had previously urged BN to field the president of the Malay right-wing group for Election 2013.

BN earlier named Perkasa vice-president Datuk Zulkifli Noordin as its direct candidate for the Shah Alam federal seat, but did not extend the same ticket to Ibrahim.

"I hope BN will give Ibrahim Ali a spot. If he is made a candidate, I will go to Pasir Mas to campaign," Dr Mahathir had pledged on April 6.

"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.

It has often been said 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.

Once an Umno deputy minister, Ibrahim won Pasir Mas in Election 2008 on a PAS ticket but later quit the Islamist party and declared himself a "BN-friendly" Independent.

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