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SHAH ALAM, Jan 25 — Malay nationalist group Perkasa has said it is not afraid to play the race card in order to rally support for its causes.

Its leader Datuk Ibrahim Ali, at a ceramah organised by Umno here last night, said that since Election 2008 the country has seen the rise of arrogant non-Malay leaders who no longer respect Malays as the dominant race in the country.

“I first came in (as MP) to Parliament in 1986. I remember, in those days, the (non-Malay) opposition leaders were of a different class,” said Ibrahim to some 400 Umno supporters who attended the party’s inaugural Juara Rakyat programme in Shah Alam.

“But after the 12th general election, we have seen the rise of a generation of more ‘biadap’ (disrespectful) opposition leaders,” added the former Umno leader, who left to become an independent in 2004 after a falling out with then party president Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Ibrahim, well-known for his oratory skills, fired up the Umno crowd when he said the “Allah” issue was reflective of the “kind of disrespect” that the non-Malay leaders, particularly from the secularist DAP, have for the Malay-Muslims of this country.

“Look at the current political situation now, we have the Taiping (DAP) parliamentarian questioning the allocation for suraus; we have Teresa Kok (Seputeh DAP parliamentarian) and the azan fiasco.

“We have Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng stepping on the pictures of the two Perak Malay lawmakers. If they want to step on the pictures of Chinese photos, it’s up to them but never do it to the Malays,” blasted Ibrahim.

Ibrahim used all these examples to back his claims that the Malay position as the ruling and dominant race, which he claims is enshrined in the Federal Constitution, is being degraded by the non-Malay opposition leaders.

But the Pasir Mas MP, who contested and won under a PAS ticket in 2008, blamed the alleged predicament of the Malays on PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Ibrahim said Anwar, as a Malay leader himself, had opened the floodgates that allowed non-Malay leaders to “step on the Malays’ heads.”

He said that from the moment Anwar was released, there “was an air of trouble brewing”, referring to the growing influence of the Anwar-led opposition coalition Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

Ibrahim said it is this “new politics” propagated by Anwar that has “nurtured” a culture of “rudeness” towards the Malays.

Both Ibrahim and Anwar were arrested in the 1970s under the ISA while they were still university students.

“The Malays have been tolerant enough. God willing, we will lead the Malays against them,” he said to thunderous applause from the crowd.

Perkasa began as a one-man group after Election 2008 but is now rapidly shaping up as a national pressure group for Umno, representing those seeking to defend the constitutional position of the Malays and the “social contract”.

Political observers believe that its rapid growth is possibly fuelled by the heated political climate induced by the “Allah” issue, which has sparked uproar among the country’s Malay majority.

Many of those joining Perkasa are Umno members who feel that the party has strayed from its original ideals of striving for and maintaining Malay dominance in the country.