

Anwar 'confirms' Najib seeking unity government

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Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim has reportedly confirmed that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has been making overtures about the possibility of forming a unity government with the opposition.

According to news site Asia Sentinel, Najib had allegedly been making quiet overtures to Anwar through former Indonesian vice-president Jusuf Kalla to explore the outlines of a unity government.

NONEThe report said the latest effort by Jusuf (right) was in Kuala Lumpur mid-last month.

Kalla had, prior to the May 5 general election, also sought to broker a peace deal between Najib and Anwar to accept whatever the outcome of the national polls, supposedly at the initiative of Anwar.

He later accused Anwar of breaking the deal after the opposition refused to accept the general election results which saw BN losing the popular vote but retaining power.

Anwar had defended the move, stating that Najib did not sign the agreement and had also failed to guarantee free and fair election as required in the deal.

However, the report said Anwar has now confirmed the renewed contacts in exploring a unity government and claimed that it was initiated by Najib.

According to Asia Sentinel, Anwar stated that he had "sent word through intermediaries" that a condition for the deal would be that racist attacks against the Chinese and Indian Malaysian communities by Umno-owned daily Utusan Malaysia must end.

"I said the fundamental issues must be addressed, ending the racial stuff, there has to be a clear understanding and commitment to reform and change," the PKR de facto leader was quoted saying, adding he had thus far received no response.

'Prior to Indonesia visit'

NONEThe report cited sources as saying that the overtures were also made through Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi who was previously aligned to Anwar when the

latter was still deputy prime minister.

In June, Anwar, Najib and Zahid (right) had visited Indonesia, giving rise to speculations that there would be a meeting between them.

However, Anwar denied that he had met Najib in person during the visit.

The Asia Sentinel report added that it is still unclear where the deal would go as all three component parties in Pakatan Rakyat will need to sign off on it, which would also potentially anger strongman and former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Najib, who led BN to a poor showing in the 2013 general election, is now in a similar position to his predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who had led BN to lose its two thirds majority for the first time since its formation in 1973.

Abdullah, in a recent interview, had lamented on the difficulty of reform and his predecessor Mahathir's role in stonewalling his efforts as prime minister.

Following Najib's general election outing in May, Mahathir, who still wields considerable influence, had said he did not expect Najib to perform worse than Abdullah.

However, Mahathir (left) appears to maintain his backing for Najib, stating that there are no other suitable successors for the Umno president post in the upcoming party election.

By tradition, the Umno head also becomes the nation's prime minister.

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