

## **Najib backpedals, hardliners swim ahead**

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**By RK Anand**

Following the ruling coalition's dismal performance in the 13th general election, it appears that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is backpedaling on his 1Malaysia agenda.

p sivakumar miba interview 120609Latest developments, noted businessman P Sivakumar (left), lent credence to the speculation that the Umno president was now tap-dancing to the beat of the hardliners in his party.

"The talk around town is that perhaps an agreement has been reached between certain factions in Umno - Najib executes their wishes and in return, he is allowed to remain as party president and prime minister as well as be offered the space for a gracious exit," he said.

While Sivakumar, who helms the Johor Indian Business Association (Jiba), did not mention names, it was an obvious reference to Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Muhyiddin Yassin.

Mahathir had made it crystal clear on several occasions that Najib's pandering to the Chinese and Indian voters could alienate Malay votes.

Against the spirit of 1Malaysia

The patron of the controversial movement Perkasa had also argued that hardline Malay rights groups had surfaced because Umno no longer protected the interests of the Malays.

Sivakumar pointed out that Najib's latest announcement of billions in aid and contracts for the bumiputera community signaled a paradigm shift in the prime minister's stand.

It was a list amounting more than RM31 billion in various loans, contracts and programmes, with the aim of strengthening bumiputera economic participation.

"This is clearly against the spirit of 1Malaysia," thundered the vexed Jiba president.

"Helping poor Malays is fine but continuing to roll out economic policies along racial lines will only serve to hurt the economy and cause the ringgit to depreciate

further," he added.

Sivakumar said that since non-bumiputera tax contribution was reportedly at 85 percent, the government must therefore implement fair distribution of national wealth.

"The current scenario has once again triggered the attention of all stakeholders both local and foreign with regard to the government's openly discriminative policy," he added.

'Najib was very disappointed'

najib announce bumiputera economic empowerment policy 140913 5According to an Umno source, Najib himself was more than willing to alter his stand given his disappointment with the outcome of the last general election.

The prime minister, he said, was convinced that his 1Malaysia clarion call and generosity in terms of funds for Chinese and Indian associations would yield positive results.

"He is very disappointed. He tried everything, except pulling a rabbit out of the hat, to win the hearts and minds of non-Malay voters.

"But in the end, he performed even worse than his predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi whom he helped oust from power following BN's electoral setback in 2008," he added.

In the last election, he pointed out, Umno had performed exceptionally well, securing 88 parliament seats.

"So it makes political sense to dish out financial aid and other goodies to the Malays in order to consolidate Umno's power base. We can no longer rely on MCA and MIC.

"What is the use of bending over backwards for those who don't vote for you?" he said.

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