

Free Hindraf 5 : Indian business group
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RK Anand

The Malaysian Indian Business Association (Miba) has appealed to the government to release the five Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) leaders held under the Internal Security Act (ISA). MCPX

p sivakumarMiba president P Sivakumar told Malaysiakini today that the five had to "shoulder the burden of certain sensitive issues" that others in the community, including the leaders, had failed to make a bold stand on.

"Though these leaders were in power, they had either sidelined these issues or were not effective in addressing them," he said.

"The five put their necks on the line, the world must know that they are professionals with families and loved ones," he added.

hindraff isa detainees 141207Sivakumar also stressed that the five - P Uthayakumar, M Manoharan, R Kenghadharan, V Ganabatirau and T Vasantha Kumar - did not take up these issues for 'cheap publicity'.

"They did it because it was a soul searching call to stand up. If their action was wrong, then the voters of all races who cast their ballots for change are also wrong," he said.

Massive rally

Hindraf became a household name on Nov 25 last year after a rally it organised drew some 30,000 disgruntled Indians to the streets and made headlines the world over.

While numerous quarters agreed with the issues the movement raised, Hindraf also drew criticisms for alleging that a state-sanctioned ethnic cleansing of Indians was taking place.

hindraf march of roses parliament 160208 t shirtsThe government condemned the movement as an extremist outfit and subsequently detained five of its leaders under the ISA.

The wave of discontent generated by Hindraf later evolved into what is now popularly referred to as 'Makkal Sakthi' or 'People's Power'. This led to a swing of Indian votes in favour of the opposition and contributed to MIC's crushing defeat in the polls.

One of the detained Hindraf leaders -Manoharan - was elected as a state assemblyperson for the Kota Alam Shah seat in Selangor where he contested under a DAP ticket.

Support for PM

Meanwhile, Miba also expressed support to the Barisan Nasional (BN) government and Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's leadership.

"We cannot really blame the PM (for the election outcome). He had inherited a government from the old administration which had lingering issues that went against international norms, issues that were not acceptable by many Malaysians," said Sivakumar.

abdullah ahmad badawi polling day vote 080308 05"With the shocking results, Abdullah will be extra careful and will take bold steps and measures to rectify the shortcomings. I am sure he will be able to support and bring progress to the nation," he added.

The 2008 polls witnessed the ruling coalition's worst ever electoral performance with BN failing to secure a two-thirds majority in Parliament and losing control over an additional four states.

Following this, there were calls -including from former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad - on Abdullah to accept responsibility and resign.

Sivakumar also recorded Miba's appreciation to Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Musa Hassan for the police's neutrality and his pledge to maintain peace and order in the country.

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