

**Is Najib behind Muhyiddin's deeds?**  
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Politics is a function of leadership, though sometimes it pays not to lead from the front but to command from the rear.

This appears to be Prime Minister Mohd Najib Razak's political maxim, especially when confronted with the possibility of soiling his 'good' reputation.

It explains why his deputy is adamant in playing his own discordant tune, contrary to the supposed harmony of the PM's 1Malaysia orchestra,

The brash Pagoh MP went on the warpath last month when he publicly attacked de facto opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, accusing the latter of being "a traitor to the Malay race."

Anwar's swift response was a law suit against the DPM, demanding an apology or RM100 million Ringgit.

The Permatang Pauh MP also told the media that "On the one hand Datuk Seri Najib talks about 1Malaysia, but at the same time Umno media and supporters were instructed to play up the issue of Malay interests and that I am a traitor to the Malays."

In an equally controversial move, the DPM openly defended a Malay daily for running a slew of articles with racial undertones.

This drew the ire of DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang who accused that "Muhyiddin publicly sided with Utusan Malaysia in its recent spate of racist and incendiary articles."

This not only runs counter to the Pagoh MP's earlier chastising of the same newspaper for a racially-charged article, but also diverts from previous punitive actions against Indian and Chinese dailies accused of the same crime.

If actions speak louder than words, then Muhyiddin's definitely went against 1Malaysia's core principle of 'acceptance' and 'social justice'.

**Doing it for the boss?**

But Universiti Malaya's (UM) anthropology and social sciences lecturer Noor Sulastry Yurni Ahmad is of the opinion that Muhyiddin is just doing it for the boss.

Her analysis of the situation jives with Anwar's allegations that the Umno leader is being "instructed to play up" racial issues.

Despite acting contrary to 1Malaysia, according to her, Muhyiddin (*left*) is still playing the game by following Najib's playbook.

The PM himself cannot afford to be personally involved in the racial and religious ruckus, said the ethnic and racial politics expert, adding that this is because of the race and religion neutral values he is promoting through 1Malaysia.

"It would be like licking his own spittle" she explained.

However, the UM lecturer asserted that issues pertaining to the Malays and Islam are potent weapons in BN's arsenal to win over Selangor.

This is why the ruling coalition (or rather Umno) needs someone to push it to the forefront.

She concluded that rather than upset his Malaysia-applecart, Najib sends in Muhyiddin to do the 'dirty' work.

Noor Sulastry further added that Najib has studied both Pak Lah's all-too-open rule and Mahathir's iron-grip on power.

Finding both to be wanting, Najib is striving for a balance in between the two.

Taken in this context, Najib's cunning behind-the-scenes manipulation of Muhyiddin seems crucial if he aims to mirror Tun Mahathir Mohamed's pragmatism in doing whatever it takes to get things done, while still maintaining a 'popular' image ala the very relaxed Pak Lah (Tun Abdullah Badawi).

But if history is to teach us anything, this is not the first time our PM employed Muhyiddin to flank his enemies.

If one would recall, it was the Pagoh MP who vocally spearheaded the campaign calling for Pak Lah to step down, while Najib maintained his apparent loyalty to the then PM.

### **Fast forward to today.**

Najib's stand-off political scheming is set to continue with his appointment of former MAS CEO Idris Jala as minister without portfolio.

While the Sarawak-born businessman will report to Minister in The Prime Minister's Department Koh Tsu Koon on KPI and KRAs, he will also report directly to Najib on 'other' issues.

If things follow the political maxim of commanding from the rear, the turn-around expert who whipped MAS into shape may soon be engaged in another 'dirty business' on Najib's behalf.

This time promoting efficiency and accountability which our government sorely lacks, rather than racial or religious agendas.

The war against 'leakages' in the government being another 'unpopular' issue that Najib wants to step into but is would rather not soil his highly polished wingtips.