

Muhyiddin And Mahathir - The Biggest Stumbling Blocks To Malaysia Becoming A High Income Nation By 2020
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Najib Razak's ambitious goal of becoming a high income nation of US\$15,000 per capita by 2020 faces the biggest stumbling blocks in the form of his predecessor Dr Mahathir Mohammed and his likely successor, Muhyiddin Yassin for their strident opposition to a fairer and more inclusive Malaysian society.

The just released World Bank report on brain drain in Malaysia proved beyond doubt that "social injustice" as a result of the New Economic Policy (NEP) was the key reason why hundreds of thousands of the country's best talents had left our shores for greener pastures. The report survey had indicated that 60% of respondents have cited "social injustice" as a key reason for their leaving the country.

In addition, an overwhelming 87% of respondents had suggested that a "paradigm shift away from race-based towards needs-based affirmative action" may entice a migrant to return to Malaysia. At the same time, 82% of respondents also called for "fundamental and positive change in the Government and public sector".

The World Bank model also found that Malaysia would have attracted more than 5 times our Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) at US\$15 billion instead of only US\$3.8 billion in the 3 years 2007-2009 had we retained our skills base and adopted a more open investment policy regime.

The Report has called for a comprehensive policy on "inclusiveness" to bring back talent into the country and stem the acute outflow of skilled workers as a critical measure to fulfil our goals of becoming a high income nation by 2020.

Prime Minister Najib had taken some initial steps towards greater inclusiveness by defining "1Malaysia" in the Government Transformation Plan (GTP) as the goal where every Malaysian sees themselves as Malaysians first, their race, religion, class and geography second.

The "original" New Economic Model as announced by Najib had called for reforms on the race-based affirmative action system to a need-based one.

However both these initiatives which are crucial towards a more "inclusive" Malaysia were killed with the strident racial supremacy agenda expounded by Najib's Deputy, Muhyiddin and his predecessor, Mahathir.

Muhyiddin made a joke of the "1Malaysia" definition by stating that he's "Malay First" with his now infamous quote "How can I say I'm Malaysian first and Malay second, all the Malays will shun me". He has further aggravated the racial schism with his open endorsement of Utusan Malaysia's "1Melayu, 1Bumi" movement just a week ago.

Mahathir who has on the other hand dismissed the World Bank report "useless" and accused them of being "politically motivated" without even bothering to rebutt any of the results of the study. In fact, Mahathir must take the biggest responsibility for causing the huge drain in talent during his long reign from 1982 to 2003 which has consistently increased to some 1 million people today.

Instead of taking a statesman role to encourage greater racial unity and integration post retirement, Mahathir has chosen to sponsor and be the patron of the increasingly militant Perkasa movement, hell-bent on institutionalise a Malay-dominant society. It was Perkasa rapid rise which had caused Najib to roll back the most critical reforms in NEM needed to achieve a high income nation status.

Najib must pay heed to the advise and warnings presented in the World Bank Report. By remaining in denial, or succumbing to the pressures from Muhyiddin and Mahathir will not only lead to the failure of Talent Corporation, but also Malaysia missing out on our high income nation target.

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