

Hindraf sacks Waythamoorthy just days after pact with BN
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By Emily Ding

KUALA LUMPUR, April 26 — In a move that signals its anti-Barisan Nasional position, the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) has sacked its chairman P. Waythamoorthy just days after he signed a pact with the ruling coalition.

Waythamoorthy's brother and Hindraf co-founder P. Uthayakumar (picture), who is running as an independent in the parliamentary seat of Kota Raja, said he would announce the reason for Waythamoorthy's sacking at a news conference tomorrow.

He also said they would "launch" two lorries, decorated with anti-BN posters and other paraphernalia, that will go around town spreading Hindraf's anti-BN message far and wide.

"We are clarifying our position. We are saying we will not vote BN, but whether you want to vote Pakatan Rakyat (PR) is up to you," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Last week, despite being extremely critical of Umno's past policies, Waythamoorthy signed a memorandum of understanding with the BN government, which purported to improve the economic position of the Indian community, after negotiations with PR failed.

His compromise of human rights pertaining to institutionalised racism and police brutality including deaths in custody for economic welfare guarantees attracted accusations that he had sold out Hindraf.

Uthayakumar said today that although Hindraf's position is anti-BN, the lorries would not feature any pro-opposition messages because PR had not done anything significant to eradicate the institutionalised racism Indians face in the five states that it ruled.

"After 50 years, the BN do not even give Indians the job of an office boy. PR in their five long years in their states also never even take an Indian as an office boy," he said.

"BN cheats more and PR cheats less — that is the Indian political dilemma today," he added.

He claimed that Hindraf uploads onto its website instances of cheating by BN and PR everyday: "We do so without fear or favour. We are not blind supporters of PR just because they are the opposition."

He was also confident that his anti-BN stand would resonate with the Indian community, saying "Hindraf is the masses. The masses are with this stand."

In 2007, Hindraf's massive protest against the BN government under then Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was crucial to the community's rejection of BN in the 2008 general election, which led to the group being banned.

However, earlier this year in a strategically-timed move, the Najib administration agreed to lift the ban on the group in anticipation of the May 5 general election.

Uthayakumar is up against MIC secretary-general S. Murugesan and PAS's Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud, the incumbent Kota Raja MP, in a three-cornered fight.

The Indian community is a significant minority in 60 of the 222 federal seats. Buntong in Perak is the largest Indian-majority state seat, where they make up 48 per cent of the 22,907-strong electorate, followed by the Chinese at 44 per cent and Malays at six per cent.

Indians make up just about 950,000 of the 13.3 million voters eligible to cast their ballots in the general election.

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