

**Weaker BN win sets traps for Najib, ST says  
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 8 — The reduced Barisan Nasional victory in Election 2013 is set to present a minefield for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, according to The Straits Times today.

It said Najib would not have found the results encouraging, especially after putting his own standing on the line by running what looked much like a presidential campaign focused on his achievements.

The loss of the popular vote despite BN taking 133 federal seats was also an indicator of a weak mandate, the paper added.

Sunday's results also highlighted the power of the right-wing elements within Umno, notably the tone of some campaigning that openly contradicted Najib's 1 Malaysia concept.

According to the newspaper, 1 Malaysia had a purportedly clear policy agenda: The notion of national unity (that underpins the concept) was envisaged, at least in theory, to translate into more efficient and effective governance.

Najib had previously been forced to defend the concept from the hawks within his Umno, as few among the upper echelons of Umno's leadership embraced the concept openly.

During campaigning, leaders such as former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad honed in on race and sought to paint the election as a Malay-Chinese contest, warning for instance that a DAP win in Gelang Patah would irreparably break the inter-comunal co-operation.

Other Umno leaders also campaigned on a similar tact, the newspaper added, playing on the existential fears of rural Malays to draw them into the BN orbit

The outcome was a growing gulf forming within the Malaysian public, with the Malay heartland that swung back to BN on side and a multiracial bloc that threw its support behind the Pakatan Rakyat parties on the other.

After Election 2013, Najib's hold on power within Umno will also be at risk, after BN fared worse than the 2008 general election that led to the premature exit of Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Najib will be mindful of Dr Mahathir and the latter's role in engineering the exit of Abdullah in the months following Election 2008. Although the former prime minister has not openly called for Najib's removal, he also has not ruled out such a possibility.

But Najib will at least be able to point to Umno's victory in 88 seats, up from the 79 it took in 2008, which also further cemented the party as the dominant force of BN.

Umno also took 240 of the 275 seats that went to BN on Sunday, which also netted Kedah for the coalition and a menteri besar post for Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, the son of Dr Mahathir.

The Straits Times then said the immediate future for both Najib and the country appeared cloudy, predicting the next five years may see a rough ride for both.

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