

**Single-party BN 'impractical', says ex-NST boss
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 1 — Barisan Nasional's (BN) plan to reinvent itself as a single party without any component parties might receive resistance from Umno's grassroots, former New Straits Times (NST) group editor-in-chief Datuk A. Kadir Jasin said today.

The political commentator claimed that only "dying" Chinese-majority BN parties such as the MCA, Gerakan and SUPP would be open to the idea, following Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib's announcement yesterday that Umno will set up a special laboratory to study the proposal in detail.

"Maybe Najib can 'pujuk' (cajole) Umno's leadership to entertain this idea, but I don't think Umno's grassroots will accept it. Umno is a grassroots party," wrote Kadir in his blog.

Kadir also questioned Umno's decision for a merger after Najib himself claimed that it had emerged as the strongest party after Election 2013.

"I don't want to make the assumption that Najib has once more bowed down to demands from the Chinese, especially when he had blamed his own lacklustre performance in the May 5 polls on the Chinese tsunami," Kadir added.

Yesterday, Najib said that Umno remains the party of the people's choice after winning 88 parliamentary seats in the election, from 79 in the 2008 general election.

"If compared with the opposition, they have 89 seats, meaning Umno alone can equalise the seats won by the opposition allies comprising DAP, PKR and PAS," he told reporters after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting.

Kadir stressed that strong Bumiputera-based parties in Sabah and Sarawak should not be abolished just to entertain the idea from Chinese-majority BN parties which have been rejected by the Chinese in the polls.

Abolishing Umno would also turn its members and supporters away towards PAS since Malays would always feel the need for a Malay-Muslim party, he said.

Gerakan acting president Datuk Chang Ko Youn had pleaded last week for Umno, the MCA and MIC to drop membership based on race and for BN to move on towards a single-party system.

Chang also said the party had discussed forming an alliance with the MCA and the People's Progressive Party (PPP), but added that the issue was over BN's membership and that a Gerakan-MCA-PPP union would happen only if the BN opens up direct membership.

This week, the MIC announced that it will discuss with political parties representing the Indian community or having many members from the community such as the PPP, the Indian Progressive Front Malaysia (IPF) and Makkal Sakthi on the possibility of merging all the parties concerned in the near future.

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