

Somewhere in Umno, the ghost of 1Malaysia drowns
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Rest in Peace 1Malaysia.

It was a vague concept to start with, something the Prime Minister promised as his vision for a united Malaysia – one where all Malaysians came first, regardless of race or religion.

Then he stood on the sidelines as the country watched the Prime Minister's own power base rip apart his delicate vision of a united Malaysia. The shredding reached fever pitch this week in the run-up to Umno's polls on October 19.

Much of the second echelon of Umno – the would-be vice-presidents – have put the us-versus-them theme front and centre of Umno politics.

Malays good. Non-Malays bad. That's the rhetoric that sells to the Umno party base, not 1Malaysia.

The Chinese only got successful because they would do all the illegal things good Malays would never do, said Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam this week to a group of Malay businessmen.

Indian gangsters are killing our Malay people, so what's wrong with a shoot-first policy, argued... wait for this... the Home Minister of Malaysia, the man in charge of the police and law and order: Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Opposition leaders and even the Bar Council have turned their sights on Zahid for his increasingly racial taunts, but will this turn the tide? Not likely. If anything, Zahid will ride the surf of opposition from non-Malays as his party base craves for more of the same.

A recent poll by the respected Merdeka Center of 600 Umno cadres and supporters revealed a party contented with itself and angry with just about everyone else.

They basically think Umno is in good shape and only needs some tweaking here and there. And that tweaking is focused on generating more support from the Malays.

They have turned their face against 1Malaysia, never mind that the vision comes from their own party president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Oh it's nothing new, say some. "They are not racists, Umno is not racist. This is a normal family affair among the party," Federal Territory Umno secretary Datuk Seri Syed Ali Alhabshee told The Malaysian Insider.

UiTM Associate Professor Shaharuddin Badaruddin was a little less sanguine.

He said Umno is taking such a tack to prolong its shelf life, by pandering to the wishes of its members.

"They are trying to show that they are more Malay than Malays," he said.

"It's a short-sighted strategy but to them it's winnable and they think they are doing it the right way."

And so even a new contender for Umno Youth chief, Akhramsyah Sanusi, takes the line that the rightful position of the youth wing is the space taken by hardline Malay groups such as Perkasa. That is where he wants to steer the youth of Umno to. His battle cry in the year 2013 after 50 years of Malaysia: Hidup Melayu (Long Live the Malays).

It says a lot. But there's not a lot left to be said. Long live Malaysia, if not 1Malaysia. – October 9, 2013.

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