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Perspective above all else

NO matter what anyone says, the decision to remove Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from his posts as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister is no less shocking than the economic decisions announced this week. For the rakyat, though, the move would have undoubtedly registered new heights on the "shock" scale.

Perspective is vital even as the implications sink in. No one in his right mind, however purportedly prone to brinkmanship, would have lightly made a decision to remove the rising star of the country's leadership.

Anwar had, after all, been groomed by mentor and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for more than 15 years, and was within arm's reach of power. It is even more unbelievable that the same man would be implicated in allegations ranging from homosexuality to illicit sex with several women and seduction of a married woman.

There would have to be a very compelling reason for this, and one which - in the minds of the investigators, the Attorney-General and certainly the powers-that-be - may be beyond reasonable doubt.

The veracity of the revelations should be left to the judgment of the court. The law will run its course and truth will prevail. Each of those allegedly involved will have to face up to the associated consequences. There is no other recourse for anyone in the centre of this crisis.

On its part, the public will have to live with the truth, no matter how unpleasant it turns out to be. However, what cannot be compromised is the need for calm and order, together with respect for the rule of law.

Although this is a "first" for Malaysia, government officials at every level are routinely fired in other parts of the world. The incident involving former Russian Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko is a recent case in point, but the lesson to be learnt is that life goes on.

There is enough to do on the economic front in Malaysia to turn the current situation around, without having to cope with the fallout from a political maelstrom as well. The way forward has been marked by positive thinking of late, and the confidence that we can chart our own progress through turbulent waters.

Implicit and explicit faith will be required of the public in accepting the tough decisions made. The removal of obstacles that threaten the body politic or economic is not just inevitable, but a necessary part of the decision-making process.

Distinction must be quickly made between an emotional response and a rational one. Incisive surgery is traumatic, but a healthy body will adjust to the loss of a limb over time if aided by a determined mind.

We can expect those who do not understand complex issues in true context to describe these with words arising from their own confusion or ignorance. Among the labels already being bandied about by the international media and foreign analysts are "draconian", "drastic" and "unsettling".

Their nervous response need be of no concern to us. Neither should we be unduly perturbed over the debate that will undoubtedly be unleashed, or take our cue from their negative sentiments or narrow perceptions.

Malaysians can, and should, live with their own decisions. This is an unavoidable element of growing pains.

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