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Khair, man for the times

NO, Dr Mohd Khir Toyo was not born great. The 35-year-old dentist has yet to achieve greatness either in his profession or his preferred vocation. But greatness has been trust on this new Menteri Besar of Selangor who will be sworn in on Thursday. His best credential is his youth which, hopefully, accords him the child-like perception of the world divided into black and white. Age and experience would enable him to perceive the shades of grey. But we hope the child in the man would prevail and deter him from the attendant temptations of high political office that have ensnared many in the land.

William Shakespeare, the Bard who spun so many felicituous epigrams on any and all human situations, wrote: "Uneasy is the head that wears the crown." The mantle of Menteri Besar is heavy indeed. Especially that of Selangor, by far the most developed State in the country. More so for a very young Umno leader. For these are hard times for the party that is the backbone of the national coalition which has formed the only Government the country has elected over the past 45 years. The Malays are divided and the young among them disenchanted. Many have the perception that the credibility of leaders and the Government, at the State and Federal levels, has waned.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had been characteristically wise in his choice. He has opted for a young shepherd to corral the strays among the young sheep. We hope, as does Dr Mahathir, that Dr Mohd Khir would succeed in shepherding the professionals, the skilled and the unskilled among the Malays in Selangor to be grateful to the party and the Government that bestowed all the goodness in life they enjoy.

As a leader, Dr Mohd Khir has sparse credentials. Before his selection on Friday, his political curriculum vitae was brief - chief of the Youth wing of an Umno division and freshman State Assemblyman, elected last November. But within two days he has proved to be an able doctor who can diagnose and prescribe intelligently and professionally. Among his first pronouncements on Sunday was that the State Government must be transparent and be seen to be clean. Executive Councillors and Assemblymen would have to declare their assets. We hope this directive would be executed, not forgotten after pronouncement and posted to oblivion as another public relations exercise.

Dr Mohd Khir has brought a refreshing wind into the award of future contracts. It is sound policy to award development projects to local contractors and make them fulfill the social obligations. It is also correct to maintain a balance in preserving and developing the environment. Whether the young leader would be able to calibrate the necessary equilibrium remains to be seen.

He is a young man and that makes him bold, brave enough to address the one pernicious addiction that debilitates the young among Malays. The numbers who are hooked on drugs total more than 800,000, almost eight per cent of the Malays in the land. Dr Mohd Khir has a logical prognosis to alleviate the dependence. He has said that parents, not rehabilitators, play a far more effective role in steering the young away from social ills. We believe he is correct as he has been in pronouncing various initiatives. If he maintains the exuberance and innocence of youth, Dr Mohd Khir might just emerge to be a leader among politicians worthy of

tracking.

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