

27/08/2000

New MB has yet to prove himself

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THE media and public have been singing the praises of the new Selangor Menteri Besar, Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo. There have even been newspaper advertisements by friendly companies - or companies trying to be friendly - congratulating him.

As for State-owned companies and corporations, they should conserve their funds.

Instead of running newspaper advertisements, they are better off showing their support by working hard for the rakyat.

The praises may be sincere and well-intended. But too much of them can raise suspicion as to their sincerity and accuracy.

Fine that he is young and well-educated. Umno and the Government are in dire need of young, dynamic and untainted leaders.

The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, told the Press that age was one of the factors leading to Dr Mohamad Khir's appointment, saying that to his knowledge, there was nothing that could raise suspicion about the new MB.

There is the danger of the media and public being overly enthusiastic and complimentary about any person. They should resist treating him as if he is some kind of hero.

He is yet to win a battle. So let us wait awhile before we add more accolades. We do not want him to naik tocang (feel self-important) and expect the Press to sing praises all the time.

Far too many politicians are unable to accept criticisms because they are so used to praises and adulation. The mistake should not be repeated with a young and up and coming leader like Dr Mohamad Khir.

Thus far, he is a "hero" only in so far as being able to extricate himself from poverty and ignorance. Hopefully, his humble background will make him realise that, like so many other young "Melayu Baru", he is a product of the New Economic Policy.

As chief executive of one of the most advanced States in the country, he can do a lot for the people if he chooses to serve them unselfishly. There are still pockets of poverty in the State. Housing should continue to remain his priority.

There is danger in lavishing a person with praise he or she does not deserve.

Already the young Menteri Besar had said a bit too much when he told the Press even before he was sworn in that he would reshuffle the State executive council.

That statement had apparently attracted the rebuff of the Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, and the Minister of Information and Umno Secretary General, Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob.

As for the separation of powers between Umno and the State Government, the effect should be positive provided the two can work together.

The new Selangor Umno liaison chief, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, who is also Umno vice-president, can still play the role of a mentor.

He will most certainly bear in mind that Dr Mohamad Khir was not on the list of candidates he proposed for the job.

Selangor needs a young and uncontroversial Menteri Besar. Then again, it is not difficult to notice that most Menteris Besar were young and uncontroversial when they were appointed to the job.

Dr Mohamad Khir will grow older with time but unlike his predecessors,

he does not have to be controversial, at least not in the negative sense.