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Under the public eye

CHANGING horses midstream, whether intentionally or otherwise, does not always bode well for the smooth running of an administration, more so when the change is unexpected. The frequent changes of leadership in Selangor in a sudden sprout of controversy are not exactly healthy as they will gradually cause the State's development programmes to stutter and stall.

As one of the leading progressive States in the country, it is a development model for its sister States. This is also usually the place where investors stop by first to get up-to-date information to help them make decisions. If there are disruptions in the administration, the repercussions will be costly.

Selangor has to remain at the top of the pack in progress. It cannot afford any kind of cloud to hang over it. Its development priorities have to be on track. Let us hope such changes in leadership do not become a malaise and spread to other States.

Although former Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar cited personal reasons for quitting, innuendos are aplenty. Talk of impropriety, allegations of wrongdoings, character assassination and poison-pen letters directed against politicians is nothing new. Many of our leaders have been subjected to them at one time or another. Most endure them and only a few yield gracefully to the inevitable.

The public and private life of a politician will always come under public scrutiny and it is a tightrope he has to balance. Some seem to enjoy the notoriety of having allegations of all kinds of scandals linked to their names. Such is the nature that Malaysians have nothing complimentary to say about them, and sending such scurrilous epistles have become a way of censuring them. While that may be so, rivals too, have been known to use them as political arrows.

The post of Menteri Besar does not come as a reward, neither is the tenure easy and light. If a leader has impeccable records and is known for being above board in his dealings with others, then he should, as a responsible leader, face his accusers and defend both his office and integrity. Such is the stuff of a great leader. After all it is the duty of a leader, if he thinks himself as such, to survive.

Scandals have brought about the downfall of some leaders here and abroad. Some have not only been successful in fighting to stay on in office in the interest of higher national objectives but also turn the fight into a virtue. Should a leader quit simply because he is too decent a man to endure innuendo for too long? Should not the higher interest of the State take precedent? Perhaps, in instances like this, there should be a "cooling off" period to mull things over.

Notwithstanding Abu Hassan's public statement, observers of Selangor politics say they cannot but detect disturbing signs of local political manoeuvring, perhaps even a covert attempt to subvert the State administration.

The State Umno liaison committee was reported to have submitted the names of 11 candidates to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad so that he can select the next Menteri Besar. This unusually long list has also set tongues wagging.

The next Menteri Besar should be well aware of the responsibilities and formidable challenges a politician has to face. He has to be able to face realities and be confident enough to stick to his guns. Above all the

state should be his first concern.

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