

When Najib failed as a statesman

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COMMENT Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak likes to brand himself as a perfect mixture between a "politician" and a "statesman".

There is no denying Najib's political wit. After all, politics has been all about survival, and despite many lingering questions over his own integrity, Najib has survived long enough to become the premier of the country for another five years, barring an anticipated leadership challenge.

However, the measure of a statesman can be defined easily by one's ideology and public statements, and that is something Najib has to reflect upon and admit - at least in the confines of his own office - that he has failed miserably at.

NONEThe measure of a statesman is determined by their reaction to critical situations - especially in scenarios where he is leading a highly divided demographic - and Najib had just undone all the work he had undertaken in his four years, including his coining of the '1Malaysia' slogan- with his horrible gaffe in branding the election results on Sunday as a result of a "Chinese tsunami".

While talking about a process of national reconciliation - whatever that was supposed to mean - Najib followed up immediately in the next sentence by blaming the result on the Chinese community, and even more dangerously, appearing to brand the opposition movement as a result of "extremist ideology".

But this is not the first time Najib had heftily contradicted himself or failed to act with any form of 'civility', a term that he likes to use liberally without even understanding the real etiquette of civility.

Ever since assuming premiership four years ago, Najib trailblazed into Pakatan Rakyat-led states to make a case for the states of Penang, Selangor and Kelantan to be returned to the BN fold. And he went about it in the most condescending way imaginable.

Dodging any public dialogue, forum or debate on policies, he stood on the comfort of BN-backed platforms and threw baseless allegations and wilfully distorted facts about Pakatan administrations - he was one of those politicians making a cacophony of noise with desperate hopes that his shouts will muffle out any dissent or counter arguments.

He was busy telling the people that only BN can do a proper job in these states. He made assessments that Pakatan is not fit to lead these wealthy states, without outlining any concrete reasons.

BN knows best?

This man was telling the people that BN knows best. But this was the same man that during a national day gathering said that the "the days of the government knows best is now over". If he can't see his own hypocrisy, Najib must be as delusional as ever in branding himself as a statesman.

And when it dawned upon him on the wee hours of May 6 that he failed to obtain a two-thirds majority - a promise he made to Umno and BN without as much as assessing the ground sentiments - and that he failed miserably in Selangor despite being the elections director for his party there, Najib turned his ire on the Chinese community.

After spending four years condescending the people for having chosen Pakatan in 82 parliamentary seats, he is now blaming the people for having voted for Pakatan in 89 parliamentary seats.

I was one of those who was expecting that regardless of the election outcome, there would be civility and magnanimity in the course of conversation in the political arena if BN was denied a two-thirds majority for a second time.

It was understandable for the old guards to spend time harping on minor slip-ups for the 2008 election results and continue believing they are given the eternal honour of managing the country.

But being denied a two-thirds for a second time means they needed to look for a new excuse - or even better, a full acceptance that a two-party system has emerged in Malaysia and must be embraced.

But Najib, known as a moderate leading a flock of right-wing groups, walked straight into the annals of right-wing extremism by cooking up an excuse that will now last and linger on for months and maybe years to come - that the Chinese had turned against BN because they have been taken in by promises and even suggested "extremist ideologies" that must be put aside.

NONE Anyone who had followed Malaysian politics for long enough knows what he was referring to - though the million dollar question is whether Najib knows the

kind of conversation he is creating with his statement.

Racial tension and racial divide will only play into the hands of Umno, MIC and MCA.

It will make them relevant again. And with MCA's refusal to take up government posts and party president Chua Soi Lek's (left) statement that the result would mean the birth of a "two-race system", it is clear that the BN leaders are training their guns on the Chinese community, even laced with a sense of vengeance.

This is not good for the nation - not after an election that should have officially heralded a new age for a two-party system.

Instead of focusing, thanking and be grateful to the 47 percent of the population that had voted for BN and helped in its course to attain 133 parliamentary seats - Najib focused on the other divide of the population that voted against him - and worse, failed to respect their choices.

He started his new premiership by making enemies, and not friends.

Najib has just missed the bus to become a statesman. And no matter how much he does to repair the damage over the next five years, this statement - even though it was uttered with finesse and some sense of intellectual ambiguity - will be remembered.

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