

## **Will Najib transform at the Umno meet?**

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COMMENT Similar to the famous adage, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is trapped between a rock and hard place.

His promise to repeal the Sedition Act has drawn stiff opposition from Umno members and veterans, who are already seeing red with him for disarming a powerful weapon in their arsenal, the infamous Internal Security Act.

After Wanita Umno expressed its objection to the abolition of the Sedition Act, veteran newsman A Kadir Jasin who is regarded as a close associate of former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad had some choice words for Najib.

Mahathir is among the most vocal critics of the Najib administration together with his loyalists, such as the likes of former information minister Zainuddin Maidin.

In a nutshell, Kadir painted a bleak picture for Najib and Umno's political future should the party president press ahead with his plan to scrap the Sedition Act.

He also reminded the prime minister that he is still in power because the Malays had saved him during the last general election.

Catch 22 situation

Detractors claim that the Sedition Act is crucial in keeping the peace, with some arguing that in the absence of such laws, the non-Malays have become emboldened to question and mock the Malays special position and Islam.

Najib now finds himself in a Catch 22 position.

To backpedal on his promise would soil his reputation and open the space for attack that he is a spineless leader who speaks with a forked tongue.

But to press ahead would mean lighting the fuse for an implosion in Umno, which could leave his political career in tatters.

Having achieved the unenviable title of being the worst ever performer in the general elections compared to his predecessors, Najib is in no position to flex his muscles.

After Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was blamed for allowing the opposition to deal a devastating blow to Umno and BN, hope was placed in Najib.

But he embarked on a different route, hoping to win back support with slogans, billboards catchphrases and pledges.

However, this proved to be a misadventure and the daggers came out.

And so Najib learned the bitter truth that instead of coughing up slogans and pledges, he should have channelled his efforts into transforming the Umno mindset.

Enemies must be crushed, not consulted

It is the party which he leads that remains the biggest stumbling block to his ambition of being heralded as a transformer.

Simply put, Umno is fearful of change.

It still holds on to the belief that power can only be retained through might and not through the contestation of ideas, engaging civil society and political opponents or debating policies.

As far as Umno's Art of War is concerned, enemies must be crushed, not consulted.

Whether Najib transforms the nation or otherwise, the coming Umno general assembly might witness him transforming himself in order to survive.

In the art of politics, scripts change all the time.

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