

**No easy feat to oust Najib**  
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**By RK Anand**

Unlike Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, his successor is cast in a different mould.

He had collaborated with Dr Mahathir Mohamad to remove his predecessor from office. And now, Najib Abdul Razak finds himself in a similar situation.

With Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim incarcerated and the opposition struggling with internal problems, the situation appears ripe for the juggernaut in Umno to be unleashed again.

The attacks have intensified, especially on the prime minister's links with the reported problems faced by his brainchild 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

With most Umno ministers maintaining a wall of silence, the party grassroots are given the impression that their president is a political liability.

This has prompted the question as to whether Najib, now in his sixth year as prime minister, will survive to celebrate his seventh.

### **Najib's toxicity**

However, PKR vice-president Rafizi Ramli believes that unlike Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, dislodging Najib will not be a simple task.

"The interests of his family and associates are too deeply entrenched," Rafizi told Malaysiakini.

"Abdullah is a soft man. Najib appears soft in public, but he is cast in a different mould," he added.

Setting aside partisan politics, the opposition lawmaker agreed with those in Umno who are bent on ousting the prime minister.

Without mincing words, Rafizi described Najib as "toxic" for the nation.

"Umno has never been in such a situation where there is no clear successor and the incumbent prime minister is proven to be toxic to his party and the government.

"In a way, the dilemma extends all the way to the public in general - while we do not cherish the thought of more rightwing Umno leaders taking the helm, allowing Najib to continue a single extra day diminishes the country's potential even more," Rafizi said.

## **Is Zahid next in line?**

Some speculate that Najib's exit will clear the path for Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's ascension to the top post.

Being the Umno vice-president with the highest number of votes, he may be named as number two should Muhyiddin Yassin take over the leadership reins.

With Umno shifting to the right, Zahid is seen as the best man for the job.

In order to retain its hold on federal power by playing up racial and religious sentiments, an observer noted, Umno needs a hatchet man.

"Someone who is not concerned about his international reputation unlike the 'WOGs' (Western-oriented gentlemen) in the party, such as Najib and his cousin Hishammuddin Hussein.

"A leader who does not bow to pressure and repeal laws that are crucial to ensure the continuance of Umno's dominance," he added.

However, Rafizi pointed out that Zahid's credentials received a bruising with regard to his infamous letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The PKR leader said Mahathir, the chief architect behind the rise and fall of prime ministers, is also suspicious of the home minister, who was once a close ally of Anwar.

"Then again, Mahathir never sees things in the long term. He may agree to Zahid rising, just to take out Najib.

"But a rapid change of guards in Umno, more so when each one after Mahathir is pushed out of office, will only weaken Umno.

"Umno is used to the authoritarian style of Mahathir and it is as if Umno now is trapped in its own doing when it doesn't seem to be able to unite behind any leaders - all of whom are considered weak," Rafizi added.