

Déjà vu for Najib?
MalaysiaKini.com
Mar 9, 2015
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COMMENT Six years in office may bring a déjà vu for Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

In 1970, the Father of Independence, Tunku Abdul Rahman Petra Al-Haj was forced to step down, to give way to the then-deputy prime minister, Abdul Razak Hussein.

Razak's tenure in office was brief. In his sixth year as the country's second prime minister, Razak died of leukaemia in London.

Unlike his father who was a frugal man, his son, Najib was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and his rise within Umno was largely due to him being the son of Razak.

This year, being also Najib's sixth year, is his most crucial year, as he is facing mounting pressure from all quarters forcing him to step down. Whether he will be able to sustain is interesting to watch.

Battle far from over

Although he had some 160 Umno division chiefs giving him the nod, the battle is far from over. Lurking from a distance is the ferocious old tiger that prowls, waiting for the next right moment to strike again.

If support could not come from within Umno, Najib's political foes may continue to whip up support from the external forces.

There is an old adage that says, 'What goes around comes around'. Whether Najib will survive the string of controversies - the 1Malaysia Development Fund (1MDB), the weakening Ringgit, the brutal murder of Altantuya Shariibuu and the threat by one of her murderers to spill the beans - all which have suddenly cropped up simultaneously, is yet to be seen.

Analysts opine that the more Najib uses force against the lawmakers from the opposition front, the more he would head towards his own demise politically the way how his nemesis wants it to be. On top of the controversies, Najib's wife, Rosmah Mansor, is also a bane to his political career.

Amidst the hue and cry - with the people already complaining of escalating prices of goods - Rosmah who recently rubbed salt into the people's wounds with her RM1,200 hairdo, has brought yet another embarrassment to Najib, with people asking how Najib and his wife could continue to live lavishly.

Najib's grant of RM2 million to encourage Malaysians to learn golf was met with criticisms

from all corners.

Analysts say that the timeliness of Rosmah's complaint, which was made during a goods and services tax (GST) event, and Najib's golf remarks, were "naïve" as the ordinary man on the street was already facing the pressures of life due to subsidy cuts.

Déjà vu

In 2009, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had to step down in favour of Najib - a déjà vu for Najib of how his father also came to power after the Tunku's resignation. Both father and son owed it to one man, whose guns are now trained at Najib.

Like the proverbial saying goes, 'You reap what you sow', Najib's chances of surviving his sixth year may not appear optimistic. Even The Economist believes that Najib's head may roll sooner than expected on the Umno guillotine.

By incarcerating PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim, Najib was basically unleashing the pent-up anger that had built up earlier in 1998 against former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

At Saturday's March 7 Kita Lawan rally, some ten thousand street protesters, showcasing the new faces of Reformasi such as Anwar's daughters Nurul Huda and Nurul Iman, have brought reminiscences of 1998 pro-Anwar street protests.

The peaceful demonstrators had braved it out through heavy downpour and possibility of arrest, to demand the release of Anwar, now a prisoner of conscience under Najib's administration.

With pressure also escalating from the opposition front, it is yet to be seen whether Najib would be made the scapegoat for certain quarters within Umno to try to win over the people's support.

It is clear that Dr Mahathir and his loyalists would not give up easily, especially when much is at stake. The mastermind behind Razak and Najib's rise will continue to pit Umno grassroots to go against their division leaders and the organisers of yesterday's solidarity with PM meeting.

He had done it with a poison letter, and there is no reason why he would not do it again, 45 years later.

Unless Anwar is released from prison, if Najib continues to rule as prime minister, the pressure for his resignation would inevitably be stepped up by both pro-Anwar supporters in the months to come and the pro-Mahathir loyalists.

With the undercurrents working against Najib, everything happening in the sixth year of Najib's term of office appears as déjà vu. What will unfold in the months ahead will be

interesting to follow.

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