M'sians want Hisham as PM, but does Umno?
MalaysiaKini.com
Mar 12, 2015

COMMENT Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein is probably on cloud nine following a survey by pollster Merdeka Centre, which saw the majority of respondents endorsing him as future prime minister material.

The Umno vice-president outclassed the most popular of the three vice-presidents in the party, Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

While some may argued that number of the respondents - slightly more than 1,000 - may not be an accurate representation of public sentiment, it's Umno which will ultimately decide who will be PM.

Given his cousin Najib Abdul Razak's performance thus far, Malaysians might be cautious having another prime minister with the same genealogical link.

The survey results are revealed amid growing speculation that Najib's political career is on tenterhooks in the wake of a raft of allegations, ranging from his family's lavish lifestyle to corruption.

There is also the spectre of Altantuya Shaariibuu, and lest we forget, his wife Rosmah Mansor, who is a lightning rod for bad press.

Najib's leadership has also left Umno and BN in a conundrum after having performed worse than his predecessor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in the last general election.

Though Umno improved its seat tally in the 2013 general election - up by about 10 seats due to a swing in Malay voters - the credit did not belong to Najib.

Instead, he was blamed for pandering to the demands of the opposition as well as to the minority Chinese and Indians at the risk of alienating Malay support. According to the right-wing's narrative, they were the ones who helped Umno hold on to the Malay votes, not Najib.

Since the last general election, the right-wing in Umno has continued pile the pressure on their beleaguered leader and Najib eventually caved in, reversing on earlier pledges of reform such as repealing the Sedition Act.

Among the hardliners in Umno, Najib and his kind are known as the WOGs or 'Western Oriented Gentlemen'.

These are politicians who rose to power because of family ties and hail from aristocratic backgrounds. They are polished, cosmopolitan, educated abroad and speak the Queen's English.

In other words, politicians who are largely disconnected with the great unwashed and do not have a finger on the pulse of the people.

Hisham, too, seen as WOG

Critics have also accused them of being too concerned about their international image, yearning for approval from Western leaders and therefore willing to make compromises that could jeapordise the nation as well as the position of Malays.

In this context, Umno might not favour Hishammuddin taking over the leadership reins given that he too is seen as a WOG.

The last two general elections have rattled Umno. What was once considered a fable has now become a real threat - the spectre of losing federal power.

After ruling for almost six decades, Umno cannot digest this for it is not a party but a dynasty, whose leaders are expected to act as emperors of past.

Against this backdrop, Umno may prefer the likes of Muhyiddin Yassin - who at 67 is likely to be a seat warmer should he take over from the embattled Najib - or Zahid (left), who unlike the WOGs, are unashamedly Malay first and Malaysian second.

These are politicians who climbed the ladder from the bottom and have no qualms in employing the hatchet to dispose opponents and deflect danger to Umno.

For them, golfing with the US president does not top the agenda.

But on that note, Zahid has somewhat shot himself in the foot with his infamous letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) vouching for a Chinese gambling kingpin.

For those who view this nation through the opaque lenses of race, it was conduct unbecoming for a Malay leader.

Nevertheless, irrespective of who Malaysians want as PM, it is Umno that will roll the dice.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source : http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/291727