Why I believe Najib will eventually step down
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COMMENT While Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak may receive public pledges of loyalty from within his own camp in Umno, I believe his days are numbered.

This being his sixth year as the sixth prime minister of Malaysia may see him stepping down by October in short, his sixth month this year. Someone has cleverly suggested the numbers in one of the articles that I read.

Although I was initially not convinced, when both celebrities Siti Nurhaliza and Rozita Che Wan whipped up their support for Dr Mahathir Mohamad, it became apparent that this may well be the end of Najib's era in power.

This may sound superstitious - and it is never intended to be - but frankly, I do not see Najib surviving Dr Mahathir Mohamad's onslaught beyond his sixth month in his sixth year in office.

Six is not Najib's lucky number

On one hand, it is his six percent goods and services tax (or better known as GST) which hits all Malaysians below the belt; on the other hand, it is because grassroots support in Umno is waning away, with Dr Mahathir leading the attack.

The attack will continue for months to come to the point that Umno's own grassroots support will be eroded away. It is after all Dr Mahathir's strategy when he goes on the offensive.

Najib's biggest mistake was to remove Anwar Ibrahim from the political scene. Najib's other mistake was to use the draconian laws against politicians and activists, unleashing the dark forces of the Mahathir era which the people have long resented.

Najib is also nowhere near to the icon that the late Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore was. Lee's stature as a statesman cannot be disputed, having built Singapore from nothing to a country that is richer than its neighbours in Asean.

With the jailing of Anwar, now, it is a feud between Dr Mahathir, the 'prime minister slayer', and Najib himself. Dr Mahathir waited for the best time to unleash his forces against Najib.

If Najib survives beyond October, I will be the first to salute him. This is because in the next few months, we can expect Dr Mahathir's attack to intensify. If Najib defies the urging to resign by one man, soon, he will face even a bigger urging from the country.

Dr Mahathir appears to have the upper hand. Since attacking Najib, Dr Mahathir's website

has tripled in terms of number of hits.

As one pundit put it, Dr Mahathir is not one who backtracks once he started his scathing attack on Najib.

Najib's flip-flop

There are a number of lessons one can learn from Najib's own failure in winning the people's support. After Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (or better known as Pak Lah) stepped down, Najib assumed the office of prime minister, promising transformation.

He should have realised that people were angry with Dr Mahathir's dictatorial style of leadership after 22 years. And the reason why Pak Lah was able to rally the people as one nation in the 2004 general election is because Pak Lah was more liberal in his policy.

Hence, Najib came out with the 1Malaysia slogan, and offering the same promises to remove draconian laws.

However, he changed his policy midway due to the pressure from certain quarters within Umno who were playing on race and religion to pit one group of people against another.

Because he did nothing to stop these extremist NGOs from causing a rift between the people and the ruling party, Najib got all the brickbats.

Anyone looking at the history of Najib's own term of office will be able to understand that had he taken the approach used by Pak Lah, Najib would have been able to strengthen his own position, heal the nation, and win the people's support.

But Najib has failed. When the controversies over race and religion rocked the nation, Najib kept silent, despite his promises that Malaysia would adopt the policy of moderation. People could see through Najib's hypocrisy that he was merely paying lips service and did not provide the leadership necessary to put the country on the right path.

Dr Mahathir is right in pointing out that both Sabah and Sarawak can no longer be considered BN's vote bank. On one hand, Najib signed the 10-point agreement with the churches; on the other hand, even the Iban-language Bibles were confiscated from the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM), and when the Attorney-General's Department cleared the BSM leaders from any wrongdoing, Najib did not order the Bibles to be returned.

The same flip-flop could be seen when Najib signed a memorandum of understanding with one of the leaders of the Hindraf movement, P Waythamoorthy (left in photo). After making him a deputy minister, Najib did not step in to help Waythamoorthy to look into the plight of the poor Indian community.

Instead, what we see today is the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) which we know will burden the people. This gives Dr Mahathir the leverage to hit out at

Najib's administration.

If anything, I believe it is Najib's flip-flop policy that will eventually drag him and the entire BN down. The jailing of Anwar Ibrahim has strengthened the opposition's resolve to remove BN from Putrajaya.

What's worse is that the people have abandoned both Umno and the Barisan Nasional. In the last general election, only 47 percent of the country's eligible voters voted for BN despite Najib's efforts to woo the people.

A choice

When Umno continues to lose the support of grassroots support, it will be a tough choice between Najib or the Malay population at large.

Someone like Siti Nurhaliza and Rozita Che should not be underestimated, especially when they declared their support for Dr Mahathir in the feud between Dr Mahathir and Najib.

If Najib continues hanging on to the top post, even those in support of him will find themselves losing their own grassroot support and the party will continue to slide further down. This is why even Cheras Umno's divisional leader, Syed Ali Albabshee is also trying to be seen in the good books of Dr Mahathir after showing his full-fledged support for Najib.

Most in Umno know that Dr Mahathir is no small fry within the party itself; they would rather not offend him or be blacklisted by him. Najib's own report card or 'Key Performance Index' (KPI), as pointed out by Dr Mahathir, shows that Najib performed worse than a 'snoozing' Pak Lah. No one can dispute Dr Mahathir on this, can Najib?

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