

## **Will Najib transform into Mahathir?**

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COMMENT It has indeed become a season of transformations with battle lines drawn and redrawn, friends turn into foes and foes into friends on both sides of the political spectrum.

Dr Mahathir Mohamad has morphed into the leading opposition voice, punching gaping holes into the Najib administration on a daily basis.

To his devotees, the former premier is a messiah dispatched from the heavens to rescue the nation, similar to the Hindu god Lord Krishna who manifests himself whenever evil reigns.

To his critics, Mahathir came from the opposite end of the divine equation - an era of darkness which lasted more than two decades and numerous institutions laid to waste.

It is ironic that the former premier is now speaking of thieves and billions carted away when he and his band of ministers were accused of grander heists during his rule.

Mahathir has also lamented that the authorities dare not investigate the prime minister, which is another glaring example of the doctor's selective amnesia regarding the mountain of reports against his administration that were stamped NFA, or No Further Action.

His tussle with Najib has nevertheless somewhat spurred a revival of his stature.

Once sullied, it has now received a fresh coat of paint, where he is viewed as a hero by certain quarters, whereas Najib and his wife, the villainous spendthrift couple.

Mahathir is riding piggyback on Najib's misadventures, especially the prime minister's '1 Major Disaster Brainchild', to reclaim his spot in the Hall of Fame.

Now even the likes of former minister Zaid Ibrahim are counted amongst the ranks of his ardent fans, having described the Mahathir as a man of substance.

There is no doubt that Mahathir has more substance than almost all the politicians in Umno put together, but this substance also comprises extremely toxic ingredients.

### **A chip off the old block**

Najib has remained steadfast in battling Mahathir, much like his warrior forefathers despite the recent 'Nothing2Hide' public relations debacle which turned the perception dial on his courage further into the negative.

His attacks - crafted by the PR team - being confined within the safe parameters of blog postings as opposed to indulging in public warfare is not helping either.

His minions have accused Mahathir of numerous misdeeds, but this begs the question why Najib kept silent all those years he spent in the former premier's cabinet. There was not a whimper of protest or disagreement. On the contrary, Najib was singing praises of Mahathir.

But that is the nature of politics, especially amongst those who subscribe to the concept of transformation. On more than one occasion, Najib has shown that he has learnt well from his mentor.

And now, talk of a cabinet reshuffle is gaining momentum. The question is whether the prime minister, who has undergone numerous transformations over the past six years, is attempting to transform into Mahathir?

When commenting on Najib's ultimatum to his cabinet members that those who disagreed with him should resign, Mahathir had remarked that his approach would be different.

The former premier revealed that he never gave his ministers an option - it was the boot for those who failed to toe the line.

So will Najib flex his muscles after the Hari Raya celebrations next month and issue marching orders to the likes of Muhyiddin Yassin and Mohd Shafie Apdal at the risk of losing votes in Johor and Sabah?

Whether Mahathir likes it or not, he must accept the fact that to a certain extent, Najib is a chip of the old block - not so much his father, Razak Hussein, but Mahathir himself.

Najib lost his father when he was 23 and it was Mahathir who served as a role model for the political greenhorn.

So in a way, Mahathir is reaping what he sowed.

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