

How long will Najib survive?

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COMMENT Most people I meet are interested to know how long Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak will survive.

My answer to them is: I don't know.

However, looking at the current situation, there can only be two ways in which Najib's denial of any wrongdoing will lead us as a nation.

First direction

Najib can continue to insist that he is not guilty.

Of course, the investigation team set up to look into the RM2.6 billion deposited into his account, as alleged by The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) may end with the attorney-general clearing his name.

At the same time, the auditor-general has indicated that 1MDB has not done any wrong based on the preliminary report received by the Public Accounts Committee.

This will not surprise many of us, as most people have in fact predicted that this would turn out to be the case, especially since Najib himself had set the scope of the investigation.

What the public want to know is (1) Whether RM2.6 billion was indeed deposited into the accounts belonging to Najib? (2) What did he do with the money after it was deposited?

Although the Umno president has denied that the money was used for personal gain, on most people's minds is: Did he then use it for the last general election?

I am personally interested to know if Bank Negara was alerted about the huge amount of money transferred into the bank accounts, and if yes, what did Bank Negara do even before the expose was made by WSJ.

It would be interesting to hear this directly from the Bank governor Zeti Akhtar Aziz, and whether she would rather listen to the voice of her conscience and care more for the future generations of Malaysians, or whether she, like others, is also allegedly placed there to protect the elites.

However, one thing is for sure: Dr Mahathir Mohamad is unlikely to turn around after he has started attacking Najib. Instead, I believe he will step up his ante against Najib even more to steal the limelight from the opposition.

Dr Mahathir's legacy may come under attack by his former ally Lim Kok Wing, but since he took up the issue of 1MDB, I believe his own popularity has shot up again.

The Malaysian maverick may find many of his critics softening their stance against him, myself included. Malaysians are generally forgiving and forgetful, provided you make recompense for the wrong you have done.

Dr Mahathir had created the monster himself, and only he can bring down the monster.

His wish on his ninetieth birthday recently is to troubleshoot the problems faced by Malaysians in general. Perhaps, Dr Mahathir is realising in his old days that there are other generations of Malaysians who will someday rise up to either condemn or praise him, and he will try to make do with whatever years that he still has to stop the rot.

The opposite direction

Hence, the longer Najib tarries, the more exposes may come, and the country would be dragged further down.

Looking at the facts, Dr Mahathir may yet have his trump card in former police commando Sirul Azhar Umar. The circumstances around the latter's disappearance to Sydney, Australia have raised a lot of questions.

Sirul has given a hint, but thereafter, remained silent although former PAS information chief Mahfuz Omar had made a special trip to visit him. Apparently, the faithful servant would not listen to someone who is not its master. If Mahfuz has no influence over Sirul, who could it be whom he listens to?

Given Dr Mahathir's disposition, I am sure the nonagenarian, who recently celebrated his birthday, would not use his trump card until the very end as it could mean worse consequences will follow.

One young man with a 'prophetic vision' told me he had told former opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim that he would go to prison, and he, too, saw another pair of jailbirds.

At the same time, with more expose coming out from both Dr Mahathir and the opposition, Najib's attempt to remain in office will only cause further erosion of the people's confidence in Umno.

Even if Dr Mahathir decided to call it off, the damage is already done for Umno. It is now a party that no longer commands the respect of the majority of Malaysians.

The question has been asked: If Najib were to step down, who can take over the helm of the country? This is a serious question, which shows people's lack of confidence in the current batch of Umno leaders. In short, Malaysia is currently experiencing a shortage of good and qualified leaders, in particular, from the Barisan Nasional fold.

Most of the good leaders have either been sidelined or given some lesser roles; otherwise, they have moved on to either PKR, DAP or PAS.

Perhaps, it is time for Merdeka Report to conduct its own independent survey to find out whether Malaysians are generally ready for younger politicians such as Rafizi Ramli or Khairy Jamaluddin.

The United States, for example, used to have white presidents who are in the sixties and seventies, but President Barack Obama (photo) is the first African-American and he is only 54. The change in Malaysia may become inevitable given the current situation.

As someone rightly pointed out, if Najib stays on, he may lead the BN into a much bigger defeat in the next general election which has to be called within the next three years.

Ultimately, it will depend on a group of Umno elites who will have to decide whether Najib can stay on. To them, it is a decision whether sacrificing one man is better than to allow the party go down the drain.

September will be Najib's sixth year and sixth month in office. My prediction is that he may not survive beyond Sept 30. In any case, we can only cross our fingers and wait to see the end of this episode.

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