

LETTER | Dr M's proposal the road to recovery

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LETTER | There is a sudden flurry of activity among Ministers in the Perikatan Nasional government. They seem to have gotten second wind, announcing attractive and never before seen policies in what can best be termed as last ditch efforts to stay in power. One even tried to “plagiarise” a recovery plan mooted a couple of days earlier by Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

On the other hand, the usual posse of detractors, in their usual name of safeguarding democracy, have come out with guns blazing. Stating that any attempt to set-up a National Operations Council-like body to contain the current crises plaguing the country will be akin to giving birth to real dictatorial rule.

Some even went as far as to say that the country was in this state of disrepair due to Mahathir’s resignation as prime minister in February 2020. This was a common theme not only among those in the government but in the opposition as well.

Zaid Ibrahim in his article "Time for Malay rulers to intervene and restore political crisis" states that the NOC proposal by Mahathir as a solution to the current problems should be dismissed by Istana Negara.

He states that the proposal is a "brutal and shameful assault on democracy, which is a rule by one man and a committee".

To this, the simple answer would be, has anyone else offered any other option remotely possible as a solution. To date, no other leader or political party has done so. It is clear to see that the current prime minister and his cabinet have failed miserably. The emergency apparently called to ensure proper handling of Covid-19 has backfired, the infected numbers and deaths have reached frightening proportions.

Zaid, like many other politicians, is eyeing for Parliament to convene as the only alternative to the current government. To them, the current prime minister suffers from a crisis of legitimacy. In simple parlance, obtain your numbers in Parliament (not via statutory declarations) and once that hurdle is overcome, all will be well. If the prime minister falls due to the confidence motion, then the next person who does obtain majority support of the Dewan Rakyat takes the role of the prime minister.

Legally, that is the correct position. However, lest we forget, we have currently the most fragmented political situation in our country. Add to that the pandemic, a plunging economy, social problems, issues on education, the grumblings of the rakyat and you have a potent mix of a country in freefall.

That is why in the current scenario, no one will be able to obtain any kind of solid majority in Parliament. Even if a certain political leader has strong, formidable and convincing numbers that will invariably be made up of foes of which the current opposition had so wholeheartedly rejected in the run-up to the 14th general election.

Hence, if the solution is only for Parliament to convene, at best it will be a mere band-aid. Fragile and set to be ripped off at any time. A fate which the prime minister has been facing ever since Parliament first sat after the infamous Sheraton debacle.

And having to put faith in the opposition leader who let a Budget 2021 vote pass without a whimper of resistance is more reason why convening Parliament is not at all advisable. Leaving the issue to Parliament at this point of time in the current political scenario is really a non-starter.

National Recovery Council (NRC) most viable

It is for this reason one must not be too quick to dismiss the idea proposed by the former two-time premier. His love for the nation and his ability to govern is second to none. A tried and tested leader. One who has handled several crises before during a total of close to 24 years in the numero uno position. A statesman with no future political aspirations. A general to lead, not pander to political masters.

Going to the polls now is not an option on the table. Not until and unless we achieve herd immunity. Doing it any other way would be suicidal, literally. The current health crisis simply does not allow it.

In all likelihood, the NRC is most practical. It will serve as a cooling off period of the political temperature, in turn allowing the council to ensure the four crises are settled.

During the 1969 emergency, the NOC did not have to contend with Parliament. It took two years for the legislature to meet. But way back then, we did not have the luxury of technological advancements. Unlike now, a hybrid Parliament seems to be on the cards.

So, with Parliament enabled, whatever plans to save the nation via the proposals of the NRC can be laid before the August House. It can be debated, scrutinised

and improved if need be. Mahathir has proposed that the NRC will be made up of savvy professionals, technocrats, persons of integrity, individuals who are qualified in the medical field as well as social policies. The NRC is touted as a pathway for a better Malaysia.

Much hue and cry has been raised since the announcement by Mahathir of his party's proposal. Some blamed the nonagenarian as power hungry. Others blamed him for virtually everything. If that is true, would it not have been easy for Mahathir to have popped into Sheraton for dinner when the Pakatan Harapan-led government fell?

Desperate times call for desperate measures. The NRC is our road to recovery.

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