

LETTER | Hope reforms will be PM's highest priority

Malaysiakini

30 August 2021

G25 Malaysia

LETTER | G25 congratulates Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob on his appointment by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, as Malaysia's 9th prime minister.

G25 earnestly hopes that the new prime minister will honour the joint statement that he signed a few days ago with leaders of the three political parties in the opposition Pakatan Harapan coalition, on three critical areas, namely, strengthening judicial independence, giving parliament a bigger role at the legislative level and in the parliamentary select committees, and ensuring good governance for the country.

We call upon the prime minister to give a firm commitment to the people that he will introduce these reforms as his highest priority. The public has been led up the garden path on reforms in previous administrations.

The nation cannot afford another disappointment because no economic recovery

can take place if the public, our business leaders and foreign investors do not see clear signs of Malaysia changing to become a respectable democracy, practising the system of checks and balances to ensure a clean and trustworthy government and showing respect for the universal standards of law and order and human rights.

However, we the members of G25, join the public and various civil society groups in expressing our disappointment at the prime minister's list of cabinet appointments which shows no new line-up to give Malaysians hope for strong political leadership as the country continues to battle with the health and economic crises.

It is still a very large cabinet, perhaps the largest in the world, with ministers and deputy ministers totalling 69 members.

The size, composition and quality of the political appointees in control of the government machinery give rise to public concerns about whether there will be credibility and efficiency in governance including policymaking.

There is also justifiable concern whether there will be confusion among civil servants and the professionals in having to engage with such a large number of cabinet members.

The unnecessarily extra-large size cabinet will entail an enormous increase in operating expenses in the national budget to pay not only for the salaries and allowances of ministers, deputy ministers and political secretaries but also their other travel and entertainment claims and holiday perks.

These expenses will substantially raise the budget deficit further. At a time when the country has to spend and borrow more to strengthen our Covid19 response system, to assist those who are deprived of jobs and incomes, and to revive economic activities, there is all the more urgency than before to stop mismanagement, waste, favouritism, cronyism and corruption.

These social ills have made Malaysia lose much of the respect that the country used to get as a rising new Asian Tiger.

The prime minister should show strong statesmanship, leadership and political courage to introduce the reforms for good governance without further delay so that Malaysia can once again become a respectable country.

All ministers and deputy ministers must be vetted by the PDRM and MACC.

There is the additional concern that ministers belonging to different factions may be vying for public attention, and in doing so are likely to make irresponsible

statements to show their political prowess.

Some may even tread on the highly sensitive and dangerous ground of touching on matters of race and religion.

All this will create social tensions, which will only go to increase the current problems of the country, amongst which is the need to manage the ever-worsening Covid19 pandemic and our dire economic situation.

In this context, it is conceivable for the public to have serious concern over the ability of the prime minister to exercise control over the cabinet members; and his political courage to replace non-performing members.

Although the prime minister has ceded to public wishes not to include the discredited court cluster politicians in the cabinet line-up, there are a few among the newly appointed who have pending court cases or who have had the same in the past.

These tainted characters must be excluded from the cabinet; for their inclusion will not only undermine the credibility of, and public confidence in, the cabinet but will also invite critics and bloggers at home and abroad to expose their shameful legacy.

Having gone through an extremely painful episode and received world ridicule over our financial scandals, especially the 1MDB scandal, it is imperative that Malaysia starts on a new journey to show a clean and responsible government. We have to stop being on world news for the wrong reason.

We are pleased with the change of minister in the Health Ministry and hope that there will be stronger and more responsible political leadership to mobilise and galvanise the full resources of the country in the public and private sector, and at all levels into a credible and competent coalition to quickly bring an end to the crisis brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

We call upon the new minister, Khairy Jamaluddin, to continue with the previous measures that he had set in motion of reaching out to work with opposition politicians, as there are many talented leaders among them who can contribute with good ideas.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/589258>