

LETTER | Another open letter to the prime minister

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LETTER | Dear Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob,

Last year I wrote you an open letter, imploring you to focus some attention on a few major issues that many Malaysians are very concerned about.

Today is the 65th anniversary of our country's Independence. Soon, we are going to the polls, to choose a new government and a new prime minister.

Today, on behalf of all Malaysians, I am going to summarise what we had wanted you to do, score your performance against the KPIs (key performance indicators) we set for you.

We have tallied your marks so that the people of Malaysia can decide whether we should vote for you and your party, or we should vote in a more capable set of people to lead Malaysia out of the mess 61 years of Umno and BN have mired us in.

In my previous open letter to you, I implored that you attend to the following. Next to each task, I scored your performance on a scale of 1 to 10 marks. The passing mark is 75 percent. Anything less is an F for failed.

After the scores, I have added some comments.

- Malaysians were looking at you for decisive action to stop the rot caused by corruption in high places.

Score? Six out of 10.

Comment – You did well here. You did not interfere in the judicial process. You let the judiciary do its thing in the trial of the greatest kleptocrat the world has ever seen.

The thief is now in jail where he belongs. We hope you will continue not to interfere in the judiciary. To get full marks, order the enforcement agencies to go all out to charge all corrupted officials. And while you are at it, arrest the givers as well, because corruption is a two-way thing. We will give you extra marks if you sack that bigoted minister from PAS who said that corruption is caused by non-bumiputeras.

- Reset the civil service and make its composition more aligned to the racial composition in Malaysia. Reduce the size of the civil service. The National Pension bill is going to get larger and larger. The government should begin converting pensions to some form of self-contribution retirement plans, like the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) for employees in the private sector.

Score? 0 out of 10.

Comment – You did nothing here. Instead, we now know how the jailed ex-PM used to pay a previous chief secretary to the government, our top civil servant, RM20,000 per month for doing nothing while appointed to the board of a government-linked company.

And there are reports that another past chief secretary to the government had been paid RM200,000 per month to presumably turn a blind eye to improprieties.

- Privatised government-linked companies and government-owned companies. Let them be run by technocrats and business professionals, and not retired civil servants and expired politicians.

Government should just govern. Leave the business of business to businessmen and professionals. Besides, the companies are being used by the government to immorally reward/entice/bribe retired civil servants and expired politicians to toe the prime minister's line. This is so wrong. Worse, they are being used by corrupt politicians to siphon public funds to benefit politicians and their cronies.

Score? 0 out of 10.

Comment – You did nothing in this issue. 60 years of the New Economic Policy (NEP) is enough. I believe many Malays are now quite able of becoming successful and rich without so much direct government assistance.

The NEP has been exploited by politicians and the crony class to create a hateful system of rent-seekers. The NEP should be replaced by a NBDP (needs-based development policy), where every Malaysian that needs assistance, no matter their race, religion, or political inclinations, must be given assistance.

- Revamp the National Education system. Champion meritocracy. Give every Malaysian irrespective of race, an equal chance to enter our national universities based on their academic credentials.

Promote multilingualism

Give scholarships and financial assistance to all those that need assistance and not based on race. Those who are not very good in academics can be developed in the trades, manufacturing and services sector.

Score? 1 out of 10.

Comment – You did nothing in this issue.

- Reintroduce bilingualism in our national school system. In fact, trilingualism is even better. Bahasa Malaysia is the national language and that should remain. However, make English also a compulsory language for all Malaysians to master. English is one of the international languages that Malaysians need to interact fluently with the rest of the world.

Score? Minus 5 out of 10.

Comment – You failed big time here. You not only refused to acknowledge the benefits of being trilingual, you even decreed that all government business and communications in international arenas must be conducted only in Bahasa Malaysia.

I am sorry to say that is extremely irresponsible. I suspect you were probably

trying to impress the naïve Malay heartland masses, to fish for their votes. I feel it is wrong to subjugate long-term national interests just for narrow selfish political purposes.

Being fluent in English will allow Malaysians direct and immediate access to cutting-edge science, technology and human advances, without waiting for translations to be made. In addition, China will soon overtake the US as the world's biggest economy. Malaysians who can read, write, and communicate in Mandarin, will be a great asset to Malaysia.

Most Chinese people are already trilingual. If you want the Malays to be on par with Malaysian Chinese in the new world economic order, make Malays master Mandarin and English as well.

- Dial back a little on the overemphasis on religion in schools. Focus more on morality, civic consciousness and on core values that all religions hold dear. Teach our children to love one another, no matter their different races, religion or mother tongues. Prioritise science and mathematics over religion.

Score? 0 out of 10.

Comment – Rein in the bigots and religious policing from PAS. Their silence on the issue of corruption is deafening. What is alarming is that they even appear to condone corruption.

- Please abolish the pension scheme, annual vacation packages and excessive allowances and perks for MPs, assemblypersons, ministers, deputy ministers and freeloaders with ministerial ranks.

Public service is not a career and people become politicians to do public service, not as a job. There should be a time limit and an age bar for politicians.

No politicians should be allowed more than two parliamentary terms in office. And a maximum retiring age of 60 must be set for politicians, because past 60, incumbents may not have the health, energy and passion to carry out the duties of publicly elected officials.

Score? 7 out of 10.

Comment – I understand that there are moves to restrict the term of the prime minister to two terms, so you get two marks here and a bonus of five marks because you manage to pass the law to lower the voting age to 18. So, you score seven marks here. Well done.

- Reduce the creation of more “Datuks” and state and national titles.

Score? 0 out of 10.

Comment - I believe several hundreds of new “Datuks” and titled persons were created since my letter to you. So, you failed big time here.

I am glad to note that Negeri Sembilan has withdrawn the titles awarded to the jailed ex-prime minister. You should introduce a law to automatically withdraw all titles that have been awarded to convicted persons, no matter the crime they committed.

This is to stop bringing disrepute to people who genuinely deserve the state titles they got.

Here are your marks, Mr Prime Minister. All in all, your average score is nine out of 80, which means just 11 percent, or a solid D.

I’m afraid you’ve failed the assessment, Mr Prime Minister.

Resist the ‘court cluster’

I cannot urge Malaysians to vote for you in the next polls. I think personally you've made a little bit of difference in the short time you've been a prime minister.

The jailing of that rogue PM under your watch, or at least the fact that you didn't interfere with the court process, will be something good Malaysians will remember you by.

The passing of the act to allow 18-year-olds to vote is another plus point. And I believe, that if you can pass the act to limit a prime minister's tenure to a maximum of two terms, it will definitely endear you somewhat with the intelligentsia.

But the reality is, you are a PM from Umno and most Malaysian liberals and especially the youths, will probably not vote for you.

My humble suggestion to you is this – ignore the pressure from the “court cluster” for you to call snap elections. The arrogance and insolence of Umno members in the Najib issue is frightening.

Stay strong in continuing to let the judiciary do the right thing as far as the “court cluster” is concerned. Hang on as prime minister till the end of this parliament's

term. Negotiate with Pakatan Harapan and Perikatan Nasional to get their support to retain you as the premier.

In the next 10 months, try to undo as much of the mess that 60 years of Umno and BN's rule that has burdened our country. Undo the unfair gerrymandering, dial back on racism and for goodness sakes, don't make Malaysia an international laughing stock by pardoning that felon.

Who knows, you might turn out to be the best prime minister we've ever had.

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