

## **Is 1Malaysia just a catchy slogan?**

**Malaysiakini.com**

**May 25, 2010**

**Gerard Lourdesamy**

Whatever noble intentions Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (below) may have, the 1Malaysia concept will not work unless the Umno/BN government is willing to make sacrifices and change for the better. The government must be open, transparent and responsive to the needs and demands of the people.

NONEReform is paramount and those who oppose or undermine it should be discarded and removed for the sake of the country and the people. The prime minister should be an astute politician with his own vision for the country.

The political survival of Umno/BN is at stake. Tough measures must be taken notwithstanding unpleasant consequences and unpalatable truths.

Constructive destruction is the only way to save the country. The abuses and excesses of the past must stop. The government must engage the people openly and honestly without bribery, intimidation, false promises and arrogance. Politics must be seen as public service and not a means to enrich oneself and one's family and cronies.

The party warlords, influence peddlers and rent seekers must be removed and silenced. They are real obstacles to good governance and democratic practices. Those who oppose should be shown the door or to jail, courtesy of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC). Time has come for the prime minister to wield the stick with leaders of his own party and the cabinet.

NONEBusiness cannot go on as usual in Malaysia and Umno/BN certainly doesn't know best. The country will not survive if the sacrifices of the past are wasted on a greedy, power crazy and immoral generation. Public confidence must be restored in institutions like the judiciary, the civil service and the police. These must be seen to be clean, efficient, trustworthy and independent of political and monetary influence.

To embrace the 1Malaysia the government must consider all the following points. The people will accept these changes gladly and it will restore confidence in the government. The economy will also benefit from fundamental political and social reforms. The prime minister needs courage to take this up and make a clean break from the past.

### **Empowering voters**

For a start, the role of Parliament must be enhanced with the creation of select departmental committees, committees of inquiry and longer sessions for both the Dewan Rakyat and the Dewan Negara. Prime Minister's Questions should be introduced at least once a week for 30 minutes in any session of Parliament.

Given the size of the country, Parliament should be in session for at least six months in a year. The Dewan Negara should comprise at least two-thirds members elected at state level and one-third appointed by an independent appointments commission, where the public can recommend appointments together with non-government organisations.

Political appointments to the upper house should cease. Provisions should be made for referendums on important national issues and direct petitions to Parliament by a minimum

of 50,000 voters. Voters should be able to debate important local and national issues outside of government, and have the right to present bills directly to Parliament for approval.

Importantly, voters need the right to recall elected members of Parliament and State Assembly for misconduct, where a minimum of 51 percent of the constituents is met.

We should undertake serious study to consider replacing the current voting system with the proportional representation system.

NONEThe Election Commission (EC) must be truly independent and impartial, and possess integrity and professionalism. The EC should have fair representation from political parties represented in the Dewan Rakyat.

There must be strict enforcement of election laws, with the involvement of the MACC, and a comprehensive law to deal with political donations to parties. The MACC must audit campaign spending after each election. Competing parties must have equal air time in the media and campaign periods should be set by world standards.

A caretaker government should be installed before a general election, with limited powers to carry on government without involvement of campaigning parties.

#### Law reforms

The judiciary must remain impartial and demonstrate integrity and wisdom. Judges who are corrupt, incompetent or abuse their office should be removed by an enhanced judicial commission with representation from the public and the Bar. The commission should be empowered hear complaints against judges and to recommend appointments, promotions and dismissals, that are binding, to the prime minister.

Obsolete laws such as the emergency ordinances, restricted residence, banishment and others should be repealed, these include the Internal Security Act and Sedition Act as well as the Printing Presses and Publications Act.

The Trades Union Act must be amended to remove unreasonable restrictions on the right to form unions and to take industrial action, and the Universities and University Colleges Act must be amended to restore academic freedom.

Workplace reforms such as minimum wage, maternity benefits, unemployment and retrenchment benefits and skills training need to be emphasised. Poverty eradication and public healthcare are areas that need serious attention.

There must be fundamental reform of the civil service to reflect the racial composition of the country. Recruitment, appointments and promotions must be based on merit, ability and experience, and not on race and religion.

#### People's money squandered

The government must manage spending and avoid opulent and grandiose projects.

monsoon cup 260906 ships sailing boatsThey must halt funding on projects connected with the likes of Putrajaya, Formula 1, the Monsoon Cup (left) and the National Space Program. Public relations exercises and foreign image consultants are draining our resources. Defence

spending must be slashed below 1 percent of the GDP.

Oil revenues from Petronas must be accountable and transparent, and subject to annual parliamentary review and approval.

These are just some of the things that the government should consider doing lest 1Malaysia remain a catchy slogan.

The government has resisted political and social reforms, and is seen to be all talk. Umno/BN cannot go on hoodwinking the people by parroting Malaysia's so-called economic success while ignoring the fundamental political and social problems the country is facing.

Voters today are no longer myopic and are well informed about the gross abuses of power, corruption and wastage that is endemic in the country after 53 years of single party rule.

Malaysians are demanding change and reform regardless of political party, and spin doctors, image consultants and public relations gurus will not fool the public. The voter may well elect an untested government than flog a dead horse in the form of the present one.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.  
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/132687>