

Political power isn't everything
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If Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin's sole motivation for seeking Umno's re-election in Lembah Pantai was to remain in power, then he has lost his focus. According to him, BN can only serve the people if it remains in power.

He believes that without power, the party is handicapped and helpless: "When we have power, only then we can do what we want." His remarks are not only arrogant, but show his party's obsession with power, and provide a lame excuse for incompetence.

The craze for power is nothing new and it is an affliction suffered by Umno politicians, both past and present.

Take for instance former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad (left), who after holding absolute power for 22 years, now feels that he cannot, or will not, let go.

He has reinvented himself as Malaysia's political backseat driver, adept at scare mongering. He finds it hard being an 'ex'. Even if there were a set of rules, to which ex-prime ministers should conform, he would probably ignore them.

Some of us believe that a political career is ideally suited to those who know nothing but think they know everything. A few treat politics as a get-rich-quick scheme. Fewer still maintain that they are in politics to craft policy; which can be roughly translated as the laws, rules, guidelines and budget which allow a society to operate.

The Umno Lembah Pantai chief, Raja Nong Chik's understanding of power, politics and public service seems very limited. He claims that BN can only serve the people if it remains in power.

Motivated by altruism

But several people without any political power already serve the public - the charitable organisations, NGOs, and private individuals who dedicate their lives to helping those who are less fortunate.

These people are motivated by altruism - not the power and the glory that comes with political point-scoring or perks that accompany the job. The people who organise help for the homeless and the runaway children are sometimes self-funded and count on the generosity of friends and the public to donate food, clothes and shelter.

NONENevertheless, Raja Nong Chik (right) believes differently. He said, "I have been to branches where we have lost. They tell me how tough it is for them under the Pakatan. They have to work hard, campaigning under tents, in compounds at their own homes. This is what happens when you are no longer in power".

Umno has been in power for decades and have lost perspective. They have become insensitive to the demands of the special role they hold - of being elected by the people to serve their needs; they forget about responsibility and accountability; they are just doing a job.

It is possible that Raja Nong Chik cannot comprehend that opposition parties have worked just as hard, if not harder, mostly on a voluntary basis, for years, in their constituency or in activities in the run-up to polling day. Unlike BN, they have no access to the bottomless pit of public funds.

In the 2008 general election, the Lembah Pantai parliamentary seat was won by PKR's political newcomer Nurul Izzah. She defeated the three-term incumbent, Wanita Umno chief, Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, with a majority of 3000 votes. For a brief moment, BN was brought down to earth.

Raja Nong Chik is unrepentant and said that the Umno Lembah Pantai members had not "rasa nikmat kuasa (enjoyed the taste of power)" for a long time: "If we don't have power, we cannot do anything. If anyone asks us for help, we cannot do anything."

Thus, when he said, "When we have power, only then we can do what we want", does he mean he wants to help the people?

Subliminal messages

Or is there a subliminal message? Was he thinking of the rewards of illicit financial exploits, and the prestige and privileges that public office brings, such as big houses, imported cars, holidays in Disneyland and 'Louis Farouk' furniture?

Raja Nong Chik, who is also the Federal Territories and Urban Well-being Minister, fails to appreciate that ordinary citizens lack the trappings of luxury that accompany life in office.

On June 18, he claimed that people earning RM3,000 a month can afford to live in Kuala Lumpur, provided they cut down on overheads such as Astro and cars.

His comments reflecting the lust for power were arrogant. Now, he has become insulting.

Not everyone, has Astro. Not everyone, owns a car. Not everyone who lives in KL, earns RM3,000.

Has the Minister used public transport? He would need a few hours to get to his destination - a hardship many endure. Without a car, many people would not be able to get to work, send their children to school, go shopping or move around. Then, there is the high cost of petrol and the ever-increasing numbers and cost of tolls.

Low to medium cost housing in KL is limited. Has he considered single mothers, or people with dependents like elderly parents? Maybe he should try surviving on RM3,000. He is far removed from reality.

Politics is a calling burdened with many risks; rejection, exposure, legal retribution, threats, even death. Politicians can be rejected by both their political masters and the public.

NONE It appears that Raja Nong Chik cannot handle the rejection of Lembah Pantai. Maybe that is why he is making every effort to remain there and has enlisted the help of Umno deputy president and deputy prime minister, Muhyiddin Yassin (left).

Muhyiddin proclaimed that BN is the best choice for Malaysia: "It's not really difficult. What the rakyat want to see is that we are sincere in wanting to help."

Do all political careers start off with hypocrisy, proceed with arrogance and finish off with contempt? Too much power clouds the vision, and thought, of weak people.

Perhaps the help promised would be conditional on the rakyat voting for BN in the next election. Deal or no deal?

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