

**Nik Aziz's 2 decades pass without fanfare**  
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COMMENT Anniversaries are not what they are cracked up to be for reason of the phenomenon of 'historical body-snatching'.

Whenever some anniversary occurs, there is a scramble to appropriate the occasion for the benefit of some contemporary cause or the glorification of some contemporary leader. This can introduce much confusion into present-day political discussion.

Fortunately, no appropriation or confusion occurred when one anniversary came by 10 days ago simply because there was no public marking of it.

NONE It passed without fanfare, which was in a way revealing of the person to whom the anniversary occurred.

This was the 20th anniversary in the office of Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the PAS spiritual leader.

Twenty years is a long time for someone to be in charge of a political office, though not by BN standards.

Last year S Samy Vellu completed 30 years as head of MIC and next March, Taib Mahmud will mark 30 years as chief minister of Sarawak.

Among BN tenancies, they are the two longest though by no means singular. Umno's Dr Mahathir Mohamad was prime minister for 22 years and Gerakan's Dr Lim Chong Eu was chief minister of Penang for 21.

Tenures are inherently limited for occupants of political office from Pakatan Rakyat; the dynamic Mohd Nizar Jamaluddin of PAS lasted a mere 11 months.

Though DAP's Lim Guan Eng is seemingly secure in the saddle in Penang, the relentless buffeting he gets from Umno suggests that either he is in danger of collapsing in a heap or he is doing so well that his adversaries cannot abide the thought.

Selangor's MB from PKR, Khalid Ibrahim, may be less bedeviled. Unlike Guan Eng, however, Khalid has to tamp down opposition not only from without but also within.

Self-imposed austerity

All this provides perspective which enables a quick distillation of the essence of Nik Aziz, 79, as a leader. His is a leadership based on exceptional moral stature.

In a period of national history when every BN leader of protracted tenure is seen as well heeled - indeed some obscenely so - Nik Aziz has not waxed rich on the benefits of office. For that alone, he deserves to be canonized.

nik aziz interview in kota bharu 130608 02 Take a look at the modest house (left) he had lived in the last 20 years and put against that the current Budget's allocation for refurbishments to the prime minister's residence in Putrajaya.

One depicts the spartan lifestyle of its occupant; the other reflects the penchant for extravagance that characterises the set from which the PM comes.

Self-imposed austerity is not the Tok Guru's only strength. Sustained by certitudes of faith, the moral clarity of his vision stands fore and aft of the man. In an era when prevarication is the norm with political leaders, there's no gray tincture to the positions Nik Aziz takes. He is surface straight through.

It was this clarity of moral vision that set him implacably against any collaboration with Umno. Had it not been for his opposition, a defining moment in our current history would have been lost to the forces of reaction.

The clarity of his moral vision and his unostentatious poverty of lifestyle mark Nik Aziz's two decades in office as a political tour de force that posterity is certain to honour.

TERENCE NETTO has been a journalist for close on four decades. He likes the occupation because it puts him in contact with the eminent without being under the necessity to admire them.

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