

Najib should think the politically unthinkable
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Probably fearing a bruising from a PKR-style infighting, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has put the Umno elections on the backburner for another 18 months.

No doubt this reflects the political reality that PKR is Umno's alter-ego, but the difference being that PKR has non-Malay members.

NNONEajib, (right) even more than de facto PKR chief Anwar Ibrahim, has plenty to worry about, within and without the party.

Meanwhile, calm has returned to PKR with the completion of its party elections, just as Umno braces itself for the fierce internal political storms that may yet lie ahead.

Not helpful either is the fact that Anwar, for one, is ever ready to embrace those who like him are criminalised, demonised, dehumanised, neutralised, isolated, marginalised (think Umno Youth leader Khairy Jamaluddin next) and eliminated, if not exterminated, by Umno in the struggle for the spoils of office, if not "a share of the loot".

Anwar himself was a victim in Umno, under former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and he knows only too well the pain and humiliation - not to speak of a black eye - that follows those who lawan towkay (fight the boss) for whatever reason.

In hindsight, Mahathir really outdid himself when he played a number on Najib through Anwar back in 1998. The damage inflicted on the party by Mahathir is impossible to undo as Najib has since discovered.

So, going ahead with Umno's divisional elections might trigger an exodus from the party to PKR - especially with the general election predicted to be "just around the corner". Put this down to the struggle of Umno members for their own posts, positions, money and lifestyles - and only lip service about serving the people.

More bad news for rulers

NONEEqually pertinent is the fact that Anwar (at centre in photo) is currently the best political organiser in Malaysia since Mahathir left office. We have to give the devil his due. True that PKR is the weakest link in Pakatan Rakyat.

However, the strength of the opposition alliance derives not from PKR but from its allies DAP and PAS, and the fact that Anwar can help forge a consensus to take on Umno and the ruling BN one-to-one.

Where Anwar falls apart is his refusal to accept the political realities on the ground in Sabah and Sarawak and be inclusive with the native Christian leaders in these Borneo states. He has plumped instead more for the Muslim leaders, both local and foreign, to the dismay of the Christian natives. Najib should capitalise on this factor.

Anwar, fearing for the Muslim illegals with MyKads, doesn't seem to trust the Christian natives - "aren't they entitled to their country?" - and prefers to go for a limited target like 10 parliamentary seats each in Sabah and Sarawak to put him within striking distance of Putrajaya. This is a target that he can reach.

In return, Anwar will just throw more money at the people in the two states by way of a hike in the oil royalty to 20 percent, up from the current measly 5 percent. This is an offer that Umno, led by the nose by Mahathir at Petronas, will never contemplate.

Leaving aside the general election, is it any wonder that Najib should stress that Umno has a lot of work ahead to put its house in order and undertake the much needed reforms, no doubt spring-cleaning as well, under his new political model?

What we know of Najib's new political model so far is that the BN has vowed to be more inclusive, meaning dishing out the goodies among more people.

Wither the agenda for change and reform?

Between PKR and Umno, it's clear that the former offers a more attractive option to the vote bank and not just to Indians and Chinese but to the Malays as well. Unless Umno can match PKR in its set up, the ruling party will always be found wanting, no matter how "inclusive" BN becomes.

NONENajib should discard cosmetics and sink his teeth into real political reforms within Umno. The best approach is to recall his granduncle and party founder Onn Jaafar's bid to open the party to the Chinese and Indian.

This is an idea whose time has come and can bring rich dividends to the Umno. No amount of inclusiveness by BN can match Umno emerging as a truly multiracial party. This can be likened to a "fourth force" in politics.

Having non-Malays in Umno must go hand in hand with other sweeping measures. These include the party withdrawing from Sabah and dropping plans to enter Sarawak.

The 50-year-old policy of ruling the two Malaysian Borneo states through proxies drawn from local and foreign Muslim must be ditched to allow the Christian natives to take their rightful place in the political mainstream.

The oil royalty must also be revised upwards to at least 20 percent from all wells, instead of the current five percent from wells within the inner waters.

Umno must also disown Perkasa, the lunatic extreme right-wing Malay NGO to which it has outsourced its racist agenda and rant.

Elsewhere, Umno must stop flogging the concept of ketuanan Melayu (Malay supremacy), declare that the unwritten Social Contract - Malays to lead the politics to compensate for Chinese economic dominance - has expired, remove Article 153 from the Federal Constitution given the fact that its shelf life of 15 years is well and truly over; and dismantle the institutionalisation of the New Economic Policy (1970-1990) in its deviant and distorted form.

All these crucial steps will be much more meaningful than mouthing vague and sweeping generalisations about a new political model. In that case, Najib would not need to wait for "inspiration", like Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud, on the most opportune time to call the next polls.

mahathir ikmal presidential lecture 290410Patently, the general election can wait. Najib should not fall into the Taib and Mahathir traps.

Having polls at the same time as the Sarawak state election will only help ease the opposition pressure on Taib. There are no political benefits in this for Najib.

Mahathir, too, (right) would have preferred an early general election so that he can keep Anwar at bay and expedite his incarceration, ease Najib out when he does even worse than his predecessor Abdullah Badawi at the polls, move Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin up to replace Najib, move his son Mukhriz up as deputy prime minister and keep Khairy Jamaluddin out of the cabinet.

Between Anwar and Mahathir, the latter spells the greater danger to the Najib administration. Najib should think the unthinkable, like Onn Jaafar, instead of gambling on the odds in his bid to seek his own mandate.

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