

The end of BN is nigh
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Malaysians are toughening up day by day. Not physically but psychologically.
MCPX

Weathering the political climate as they sharpen their level of critical analysis, watching intense and high-profile dramas being staged and circumstances manipulated before them. Nobody is sure whether it will turn out as a boon or bane for the nation.

While millions of Malaysians are retreating into their private and daily lives, politicians across the divide are sinking into 'realpolitik-ing', either taking on the role of aggressors or defenders of their political turf.

As Malaysians face the problem of economic survival, our highly-paid politicians are battling for their political survival.

abdullah ahmad badawi and barisan nasional bn manifesto election 2008Pakatan Rakyat is beginning to learn the difference between winning an election and governing, and the 'old ideological' 14 party Barisan Nasional led by Umno president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is under serious threat of an internal political mutiny.

Mohd Kamarulnizam Abdullah's contributing article in the Encyclopedia of Malaysia said, "In 1974, an enlarged political coalition-which included former opposition parties and parties from Sabah and Sarawak, was formed."

"Known as the Barisan Nasional, it has proved to be a success, winning at least two-thirds of all parliamentary seats at each general election that it has contested."

In 2008 its electoral fortunes took a nose-dive as Pakatan gave it a beating. The BN mantra, diversity of strength, has become an adversity in weakness.

And now, for the first time in Malaysian history, a Malaysian prime minister is potentially facing a motion of no-confidence in Parliament, more so detrimental since it is proposed by its own coalition member, Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp), even if it is technically tough for the motion to materialise in Parliament as it stands.

More 'pockets' of dissent against the Abdullah leadership is expected in the following weeks ahead.

Birth of Pakatan

Whether the 33-year old BN government will keep going strong in the months ahead or will be overthrown by Pakatan in the coming months is causing immense excitement for some Malaysians and consternation for others.

While the reasons for the current Umno leadership's internal problems lie deeper, its weakening position is triggering nerve-wrecking effects upon the BN, so soon after the "308 political tsunami." (March 8, 2008 general elections)

The successful formula of BN is being challenged by a now-emerging two-party system in the country, through the birth of Pakatan Rakyat, fathered by people's power.

Mavis Puthuchery and Norani Othman in their work *The Electoral System of Malaysia* quoted Khoo Boo Teik's remark on the position of the Barisan.

"In fundamental ways, the Barisan Nasional, which built upon the accomplishments and failures of its predecessor, the Alliance, is the institutional emblem of Malaysian democracy seen from actual practice and advocated by those in power.

"This is partly because BN is not only the historical product of the political system but the most successful competitor in the electoral process."

For the first time, Malaysian voters have used the ballot box to bring about the desired changes in response to numerous deep-seated and underlying grouses.

barisan rakyat pakatan rakyat pkr dap pas leaders
The growing gap between the Abdullah administration and the people, general disillusionment within the BN parties and the rakyat's resentment against a government that seem to serve the interests of those in power, resulted in many BN candidates thrown out in the states of Kelantan, Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

Pakatan controls these states except for KL, which is a federal territory.

BN's often claimed "cohesiveness and uniqueness" is currently being challenged.

From racial politics to the politics of development, the BN is critically being questioned and scrutinised for not 'walking the talk' on its framework of power-sharing, fairness and devotion to the task of national development particularly in Sabah and Sarawak.

The Barisan Nasional - whose symbol the dacing (scales) represent the balancing of the needs of various communities while holding them together - is fast becoming a myth.

Its 'Justice for All' slogan, is increasingly being challenged and questioned by leaders of component parties in Sabah and Sarawak evidenced by their dissenting voices getting louder by the day.

Reinvent and transform

The highrise buildings, commercial hubs, office complexes, condominiums, residential estates, highways, expressways and flyovers which were synonymous with BN are no longer enough proof of a modern successful leadership.

Rather the sin count is rising, with growing crime rates, falling standard in the quality of living, mismanagement, abuse of power, rampant corruption, and blatant disregard to good governance through accountability and transparency and failure in having local elections.

Will the BN be able to re-brand, reinvent and transform? American historian James MacGregor Burns has drawn the distinction between "transforming leadership" and "transactional leadership."

In his Time magazine article (August, 1979) Burns explains that "transforming leaders are capable of directing people through fundamental change of their institutions and societies.

"During times when presidents have to plan ahead and have to ask sacrifices from people instead of simply making promises to them," says Burns, "transforming leadership is imperative."

Lance Morrow in his special Time magazine article The cry of leadership postulated: "The transactional variety of leadership is essentially managerial, competence for a quiet time. Jimmy Carter clearly spent the first two-and-a-half years of his presidency as a transactional leader, he was struggling to become a transforming leader."

abdullah sapp bn supreme council 190608Unfortunately, Malaysians in general have a negative perception towards their government and view the current prime minister as neither a transforming leader nor a transactional one.

Abdullah's Malaysian legacy of failing integrity, loss in the sense of fairness, being in denial and recycling tainted leaders is responsible for the nation's diminishing competitiveness in industry and technology. His infamous achievements have made his rule catastrophic leadership.

Racial politicking has replaced nation building. Race supremacy has replaced our melting pot. We live with broken promises where there is little respect for a civil society pushing for reforms in the judiciary, good governance and freedom of information.

Former information minister Mohamed Rahmat in October 1999, described the relationship within Barisan parties as, "Abang (big brother) and adik (siblings). Who's abang or adik does not matter."

The national focus may no longer centre on whether BN is capable of evolving to meet the challenges and demands of our rapidly developing society, both in economic and social terms.

No turning back

Malaysians for the first time through their courage and determination have tasted the power through the ballot box and there is no turning back.

There is a choice through a two-party system. BN should no longer be the 'only' successful formula.

In the coming weeks, Malaysians can expect more explosive political developments as the power struggle to control the country takes centre-stage. Whatever the outcome, one element is certain and that is change.

The pertinent query among Malaysians - is not whether the Abdullah administration is obsolete rather whether democracy will flourish under a Pakatan type of government.

There is no consolation that the leadership quality of statesmanship amongst the Umno ranks from the Alliance days is sadly lacking in the present-day BN.

mahathir khir toyo kmu forum 010408 06Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamed was

right in saying, "The peninsular BN parties should realise that they have become irrelevant. Ignore the people and you will find yourself totally rejected."

However, there remains a strong optimism among Malaysians that the future government of the day should be one with strong leadership values, and endowed with a human heart.

More importantly, Malaysians no longer need to protect themselves from their government, particularly the type of government provided by Abdullah that drifts from a leadership crisis to a crisis government.

The nation's destiny is indeed at crossroads which may be the beginning of a Malaysian dream.

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