

Between a Thai chef and a Malaysian civil servant
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Politics is the only profession that anyone from any other profession can claim to be in practice. Malaysia has seen its fair share of these 'pretenders to the throne' – a prince, a lawyer, an army man, a doctor and last but not least, a civil servant.

The princely Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman (who was also a lawyer) secured our country's independence from the British and governed Malaysia through tough but exciting times.

The lawyer Tun Abdul Razak came in next and introduced one of the most destructive policies for a multiracial country. Then the army man Tun Hussein Onn took over during the years of relative peace and progress.

After that the doctor arrived and prescribed hundreds of mega projects and monuments to cure the country of the plague of international obscurity. Economic progress was achieved amidst extreme feelings of love from his supporters and hatred from his opposers.

Lastly, and unfortunately the least of all, came the civil servant Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the rest, they say, is history.

Malaysia is not alone when it comes to choosing the queerest of people to lead the country. Our neighbouring Thailand too, has a professional chef as its current prime minister.

Perhaps that is the reason why both Prime Ministers Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Samak Sundaravej are facing increasing pressure from their own people to step down due to their ineffective leaderships.

The only difference between the chef and the civil servant is that the former has to deal with violent protests whereas the latter is still blissfully ignorant of the current silent revolution taking place in his own country.

The first jolt to Abdullah's leadership was on 8 March 2008 when the ruling party lost its two-thirds majority in parliament and five states fell to the opposition.

The second eye opener was Anwar Ibrahim's landslide victory in Permatang Pauh on 26 August 2008, which paved his way to parliament, albeit as an opposition leader.

Is our Prime Minister hoping to be 'third time lucky'?

From the current state of affairs, if 'third time lucky' does come true, it will be the Pakatan Rakyat's luck rather than his.

The gist of the story is, people should choose their leaders carefully. In countries where the people have a choice, they should assess the capabilities of their politicians and ensure that they have a certain amount of qualification before electing them.

Experience, charisma and political agility are important, but the candidate should have at least a certain degree of academic proficiency, to put it politely.

The modern world is a different world from the one a century ago. We need leaders who are technologically savvy, economically well versed and ready to react positively to any developing crisis. More importantly, we need leaders who are pro-active and pliable to change when the need arises.

Politics is one of the most important professions required for the development and progress of any country. And yet it is sad to note that most politicians in the world today, including those from Malaysia, are not trained in politics.

Amidst all the feudal titles like Tan Sri and Datuk Seri; and professional qualifications like Professor, Doctor (Dr) and Ingenieur (Ir) that adorn our politicians' names, shouldn't there be at least a Degree or a Doctorate in Political Science to add to their already elongated pomposity?

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