

**Now it is Pak Lah's turn to face the music**  
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It is a final countdown for the embattled PM. Come Oct 9, our lame duck prime minister will have to make some hard choices which will affect the nation as a whole. Will he defend his president's post in the party and the prime minister-ship that goes with it or will he succumbed to pressure from Umno grassroots supporters to make way for his deputy as the result of the last debacle in the polls where the party and BN lost big?

The last time Malaysians were on the edge was on Sept 16 when a change of government which was supposed to take place did not occur. The political storms that are brewing in this country have transfixed the nation and who will be our next prime minister will have a bearing on all sections of society.

Since independence, Malaysia has had only five prime ministers and each leader had their own style of running the country. For most Malaysians born after independence, they can only recall Dr Mahathir Mohamad's long tenure in office while other prime ministers' tenures of office can be only recollected from history books written by historians.

The writing seems to be on the wall for the beleaguered prime minister to decide on Oct 9. A lot of Umno would have nominated Najib Abdul Razak and Muhiyidin Yassin for the number one and two posts of the party and if Pak Lah insists of defending his president's post, he will face the embarrassment of not getting the right numbers.

Leaders would want to leave office on their own terms and conditions. But except for death in office, practically all our prime ministers, except for Dr Mahathir Mohamad, failed to do that.

Tunku Abdul Rahman retired prematurely due to the May 13 incident. Hussin Onn, after being challenged by an unknown Umno member by the name of Suleiman Palestine who managed to win quite a number of votes in the 1978 party polls, also retired prematurely in 1980 citing health reasons. Now it is Pak Lah's turn to face the music.

The political landscape of this country has undergone a tremendous change since the last polls. Never before had the present regime lost five state seats and their two thirds majority in parliament. BN - and its predecessor the Alliance - had practically ruled the nation since independence but now voters are given a choice to choose alternative parties to take over the government.

So whoever becomes our next premier will not have it easy this time around. If and when Najib takes over, he will inherit a weak economy due to a global financial crisis as well as face a strong opposition front led by Anwar Ibrahim who will find ways and means to achieve his ambition of taking over the country before the next general election.

Public sentiment on the ground seems to be against the present regime. Rampant corruption and abuse of power by the ruling elites have caused untold misery to the common people. As usual, when the powerful sin, the common people pay for their crime.

Spiral price increases for food, transport and services have put a dent in the people's standard of living and they are finding it hard to pay their bills and to put food on the table

for the family to eat.

The government of the day seems to be paralyzed over getting our economy moving as our leaders seem more interested in keeping their high posts when being challenged by the powerful opposition front.

Infighting among the BN component parties can only weaken the coalition front and one wonders if the BN ship might spring a big leak if, one by one, the component parties leave BN due to their frustrations in losing big in the last polls.

Come Oct 9, all the riddles about our future prime minister will be answered. The common people are suffering from political fatigue at the moment and would only wish that political stability in this country will take place soon in order to improve the livelihoods of the people for the better.

Our country is at a transition period, and like Indonesia and Philippine before us, who became thriving democracies after the fall of the dictators Suharto and Ferdinand Marcos. We are heading for the same direction also, albeit at a slower pace than those two countries.

As they say, it will only get worse before it gets better. Hopefully a new political scenario will emerge for this country where the rule of laws is fully adhered to and politicians are people who have principles and are not involved in corrupt practices.

This utopia can only be achieved if our people's mindset is on par with other modern and civilised nations where democratic principles are sacrosanct.

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