

Najib should allay the fears of the people
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Dr Chris Anthony

With the announced exit of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as prime minister in March, there are already moves within Umno to ensure his deputy Najib Abdul Razak takes over the premiership without contest.

Umno would have gained the much needed credibility if only it encouraged open contests for all its posts, including the president, in the coming party polls in March. This is the only way to ensure that the best man gets the job and it would be in best interest of democracy within the party.

Judging from the on-going nominations for the post of Umno president, Najib is almost certain to succeed Abdullah as the next prime minister. With that possible scenario in mind there are already many who have expressed fears of the possible return of another era of 'Mahathirism' with Najib's ascent to the top post.

In fact, former law minister Zaid Ibrahim says that Dr Mahathir Mohamad will become Malaysia's 'de facto PM, standing behind Najib. Many have also expressed fears that Najib's rule may also see the return of authoritarianism where suppression of freedom of expression and human rights would be stepped up.

All these fears may be unfounded but till now Najib has not said or done anything to reassure the people. I am sure that after all these years in politics Najib has developed his own style of leadership, has his own ambitions to develop the nation and is not going to allow himself to be dictated by any quarter.

I am sure he values the principles of democracy and rule of law and would uphold them at all times and at all costs during his tenure.

If Najib really wants the people to rally behind him, he has to quickly act to allay these fears of the people from all sectors. He must move fast to reassure the people of his capabilities and good intentions to serve them more effectively.

The people do not want a prime minister who would be a mere puppet being influenced by others into making decisions that are unwise and wrong. The last thing right-thinking Malaysians want is the return of Mahathirism, which they had in abundance, that is to say enough is enough.

Apart from the possible return of Mahathirism, there are also many major scandals involving the prime minister in-waiting.

Najib must be able to prove his innocence without the slightest doubt if he is to be credible leader who wants to bring honour and pride to the nation. He must boldly meet these scandals head on to clear his name, otherwise he would be doing a great disservice to the nation and its people.

The people want a PM who is seen to be clean, trustworthy and above all who has the interest of the people at heart in formulating and implementing policies that are in keeping with the times.

They do not want outdated policies that are not going to succeed in today's keenly competitive global world.

The opposition is bent on preventing Najib from taking over the reins of power. It is throwing all sorts of allegations, one after the other, to discredit him. Najib must move to prove beyond doubt that all the allegations are baseless and that he is that right man for the job.

Silence on his part will only give credence to the opposition and deny him this golden opportunity to become the sixth prime minister of the nation. The people are mature and wise enough to reject Najib or any leader who cannot prove his worth.

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