

DATE: 31/1/2010

Bribe-free? Only if we want it

"BRIBE-FREE Malaysian"—that was the car sticker staring at me from the back of a blue Suzuki yesterday. I smiled because it summed up one aspect of the Government Transformation Programme launched on Thursday.

The Suzuki owner sped off, perhaps telling everyone that we should all strive to be bribe-free. I'm sure that everyone has a small story to tell when each had to give *duit kopi* (coffee money) in return for small favours.

Such lack of discipline on our part has to stop if we are really serious about wanting to create a Malaysia that is bribe-free. There's no need to itemise the reasons why bribes are offered; there are plenty and none of them are justified.

When Datuk Sen Najib Razak launched the GTP at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, the hall was packed, listening to his off-the-cuff speech. One tiling many people agreed — the prime minister is good when delivering off-the-cuff speeches.

But that's another thing altogether. The prime minister knew that there were many cynics around, some of whom were probably winking at one another knowingly. Wanting to combat corruption and fighting crime is one thing, but executing the plans would be another, the cynics said.

As if sensing that this was what the cynics had in mind, Najib went on to say that the success or failure of the GTP would be judged by the people. Which is why the government is committed to ensuring that the transformation programme succeeds.

This means that his administration is set to make the GTP the benchmark by which he succeeds or fails.

"The people will decide whether or



not we have fulfilled our promises to them. In a parliamentary democracy, if the people think we have not kept our promises, then we must face the risk.

"We are ready to be judged by the people when the time comes," the prime minister boldly said, adding that an annual review would be produced.

"I'm nervous about this, but it's all right. In the report, we will state how many people are no longer among the hardcore poor, how many children have registered for preschool education, how many people are using public transport, the corruption rate, and others.

"The people will be able to see all this, and that is why the government will not escape responsibility."

The prime minister's bold declaration of the government's position on the GTP is a fair reflection of his confidence. In not so many words, Najib said that his future and that of his administration rested partly on the successful implementation of the GTP.

That's something to think about isn't it? But strictly speaking, what options are there for us? Do we do nothing and continue to bribe our way through to get contracts? Do we slip a few ringgit to the traffic policeman for beating the red light?

Some of us may have been guilty of this at some point. And the same people will heap praise that other countries have less crime and that their police officers do not take



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak (centre) and Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (third from right) with other ministers at the launching of the Government Transformation Programme on Thursday.

bribes. Shame on us, actually.

On television a week ago, I asked the prime minister if the civil service was up to the challenge of transforming itself to be more efficient and effective. He believed so, and added that much would depend on their commitment to get the job done.

It was also heartening to see Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the GTP launch. I recalled that Dr Mahathir had initiated many programmes soon after assuming office, some of which were also criticised and looked at cynically

by the people.

But the success of these programmes are here for all to see. On this note, I hope the GTP would be successful too because it provides continuity in our effort to have a clean, efficient and trustworthy government as we march towards Vision 2020.

Of the six National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) — corruption, crime, education, transport, rural basic infrastructure and poverty — I personally would put crime reduction and elimination as my preferred area

of priority.

A month ago, my neighbour had six tyres stolen from two cars; another one had his one-tonne truck driven away by robbers and everyone knows someone who's been traumatised by snatch thieves.

But all six NKRAs are key concerns that touch everyone. A lot of money — (RM18 billion) — is being set aside to improve these areas to boost the livelihood of the rural community in the next three years.

As ordinary citizens, we too have a role to see to the success of the GTP.