

Democratic' process of opposition a joke

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Najib lays bare the dynastic grip and undemocratic ways of PKR and DAP in his presidential address

A political dynasty is virtually equated to favouritism/nepotism, a parent's iron-gripped rule of the nation or party determinedly handed over to a son or daughter at the expense of considerable leadership of non-family leaders.

In establishing this familial expediency, the dynasty wields unquestionable power, especially in deciding the chain of command and how the political/financial largesse is distributed.

In a dictatorship, the dynastic tendencies are hard to resist: how do you say no to the likes of Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-il (North Korea), François-Jean-Claude Duvalier (Haiti) or Hafez-Bashar al-Assad (Syria)?

In democracies, the idea of allowing dynasties is a contradiction in terms, nepotism being its distasteful by-product. Yet, the rise of dynasties in democracies is real, but its existence and longevity are shocking.

There are some democratic countries who insist that a father's influence had no bearing on the rise of the son, though it is perfectly acceptable if the child was elected by immensely popular vote.

In Malaysia, dynasties flourish in two opposition political parties, shockingly with members' blessings — the same members who can't fathom the delicious irony of their fault-finding in the years they have been accusing rivals in government parties of playing the family nepotism or undemocratic game.

The dynastic conundrum was one of the troubling issues raised by Datuk Seri Najib Razak in his presidential address yesterday when he alluded, not by name, but by alphabetical existence.

The way Najib mocked the so-called democratic process of PKR and DAP was biting:

In Party A, the de facto leader is not only not democratically voted, he is more powerful than the party president;

In Party B, it is a party that labels itself as democratic but is truly undemocratic. What is democratic about them when branch delegates elect 20 central working committee members and the latter chooses the top party leaders?

In Party C, the position of spiritual leader is visibly not democratically elected, but clearly more powerful than the president.

"It's all the same with Party A. Additionally, Party A; the husband, de facto leader; the wife, president; eldest daughter, vice-president; the deputy president... hrmmm... no need for us to elaborate..." he deadpanned to the delight of delegates, who knew exactly what he was implying.

In Party A and Party B, the dynastic grip has been long-drawn and belligerent. It's still unconscionable that their members endorsed it and yet, have the gall to lambast rivals as dictators and authoritarians.

After Najib took over as Umno president, he pushed for further democratisation of the party by enlarging the voting franchise to elect party leaders. Now, 50,000-odd members are slated to vote for new Umno leaders in the next elections, not the 2,700 delegates.

Najib's initiative in enlarging the voting base will practically kill the scourge of money politics and the buying of votes that plagued the party for decades, a bold push not even his illustrious predecessors could manage. You could say that Najib, too, fulfilled a dynastic quest when he ascended to the premiership in April 2009, presaged a generation ago by the leadership of his father, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein in 1971.

But the difference of 40 years have passed, if you want to quibble that Najib inherited a political dynasty of sorts. Even then, it is a legacy that Najib inherited and wears like a great badge of honour.

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