

**Najib urged to field more reformers as candidates**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 4 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak must use Election 2013 to aggressively sideline nationalists in Umno and put reformers as candidates, the prominent international financial newspaper Wall Street Journal has said in an editorial.

The newspaper pointed out that Malaysia as a competitive economy demands plural politics, and warned Barisan Nasional (BN) that otherwise voters could be tempted to give Pakatan Rakyat (PR) a chance as a way to overcome Malaysia's feudalism.

"Malaysia's system of holding back the dynamic Indian and Chinese minorities has turned it into a bastion of mediocrity in a fast-growing region.

"The country's best and brightest leave because the cronyism and racial quotas in education and employment hold them back," the newspaper said.

Last week, the influential former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin also urged Najib (picture) to clear his Cabinet of deadwood to regain public confidence in the administration.

Daim had said there was a public perception that Najib's Cabinet included too many non-performers.

But today's WSJ editorial pointed to a wider issue of nationalists in Umno.

The right-wing front in Umno — marshalled by supporters of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad — has grown in strength in recent years, making them difficult for Najib to contain.

The Wall Street Journal pointed out that Umno continues to be riddled with complacency and corruption.

Najib's government deserves credit, the newspaper said, for responding to the public's dissatisfaction with corruption, lack of domestic competition and repressive laws left over from the colonial period.

"However, these reforms were limited.

"And while they were good for the country, they may not translate into a victory for Mr Najib. The population is young and increasingly urban, and many of these voters think the pace of reform has been too slow, especially in reforming the system of affirmative action for the ethnic majority Malays," the newspaper said.

"Meanwhile, the Malays out in the villages who benefit most from the preferences and cash handouts find the changes threatening."

Najib, the newspaper said, probably recognises the need to move faster but cannot afford to alienate his Malay base.

Ultimately, it said, Umno's list of candidates will tell voters much about internal party politics.

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