

Election aftermath: 10 things Najib must do

Kini Biz

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The dust from the 13th general elections has not quite settled and there is some chance it may be kicked up again as Pakatan Rakyat could challenge some of the results in court. For Barisan Nasional, and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, they rule with a minority of the votes, a morally illegitimate government that reflects a flawed and fraudulent election system.

If BN wants to pick up and regain the people's trust and recover some lost ground from Pakatan, it simply cannot continue as before. There's no point pointing fingers at the Chinese community when there has been an urban swing to Pakatan by all communities living in major towns, cities and suburbs.

Even if the swing of the Chinese community to Pakatan is greater than that of other communities, they are entitled. The Chinese, like any other community, can vote for any party they want without having to face racist, seditious, provocative and loaded questions from Utusan Malaysia such as "Apa lagi Cina mahu?". Utusan is not and never will be the distributor of the largesse of the country which is owned by everyone.

There are a number of substantive issues with BN as government, top of which is corruption. Next comes a steadily deteriorating education system totally out of whack with our requirements as a people and a nation. Then there is systematic racial and religious polarisation as an instrument of control and to appeal to the Malay vote. Also, there is this issue with Najib's wife.

Below are a list of 10 things that Najib must do if he and BN are to regain credibility in the eyes of the people and do better. If he chooses to do otherwise and makes hay while the sun shines, future governments can still hold him accountable. The change requires an about turn from the way things have been done for the past three or so decades but in a sense, he has no choice – do or perish at the polls. Do, and you may be forgiven your past transgressions and faults.

1. Put a stop to corruption, patronage and cronyism

Najib should publicly declare a national fight, jihad, crusade or any other name he wants to use against corruption. He must make a firm stand that corruption in any form, anywhere and at any level will no longer be tolerated. He may want to look into an amnesty system suggested by his brother CIMB group CEO Nazir Razak but should include significant payback of ill-gotten gains too. Without an amnesty of past offences, too many people may have to go to jail and it may even affect the proper functioning of the country. Najib should invite public feedback for such a scheme.

There are a number of prongs to this, and three more of our measures relate to corruption. Among the key things that he has to do is to unshackle the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and empower them to investigate everyone. If he makes MACC accountable directly to Parliament via a change in legislation, he is likely to get support from the opposition even.

As part of the process, he needs to devolve the power to prosecute from the Attorney General, which results in a whole lot of selective prosecution and multiple opportunities for corruption. Power to prosecute should be delegated to individual, investigating deputy public prosecutors with the AG having an oversight to require DPPs to prosecute, but never to stop prosecution.

Also individual regulatory bodies such as Bank Negara Malaysia, the Securities Commission, the Companies Commission, Customs, etc must be given their own power to prosecute without reference to the AG at all.

Once these measures are done he must allow an independent, revitalised and efficient MACC and regulatory bodies to do their job without fear or favour.

And getting rid of corruption means as well a system of free and fair elections with proper controls, checks and balances to stop cheating at the polls and ensure an electoral roll without phantoms and other ghosts.

2. Shut down 1MDB and similar dark organisations.

We have written much about 1Malaysia Development Bhd [here](#) and [here](#) and trust there is more than enough information to begin investigations. In a nutshell, 1MDB represents one of the most insidious schemes ever to cheat the nation out of billions of ringgit. It has raised loans of about RM20 billion and mispriced them by as much as RM4 billion, the money going into the pockets of unnamed people who were able to get first bite at the cherry.

On top of that RM7 billion of funds remain overseas in Caymen Island, invested in indeterminate portfolio funds while more than RM10 billion have been used to buy power assets at inflated prices from their current owners. By liquidating 1MDB, Najib will put an end to a dubious scheme of raising capital and investing which is done under closed doors and in the dark with dubious partners. We really urge Najib to take a close look at 1MDB. He will be shocked at what has happened. If he wants to end corruption and wastage of funds, he has to end 1MDB.

3. Get in a clean, able, efficient and technocratic Cabinet

Tough times call for tough actions. You can't have a bunch of people who may be crooked at the top and hope to make the country straight. It is imperative that the Cabinet is based on merit and ability. Yes, you have to make allocations according to parties but if the parties don't come up with a credible name, throw it out. Ministers don't have to be MPs, they can be made senators to join the Cabinet.

Party warlords should remain that and do their politicking elsewhere and leave the running of government largely to technocrats. It will be a grave mistake to use Cabinet posts as a system of rewards and punishment. Malaysia needs to move to a system whereby only capable people have a chance of becoming Cabinet ministers.

It is important that Cabinet ministers are untainted, have no major links to any major business groups, and act independently and in the best interests of the country as a whole at all times.

4. Declare his assets and require the same for public reps

Najib must set the example by declaring all his assets publicly to show that he has not accumulated assets beyond his normal means. He must require the same for his Cabinet ministers, chief ministers, MPs and state assemblymen as well as higher ranking civil servants, and introduce necessary legislation which is likely to be supported by the opposition. This will improve public confidence in our elected representatives and civil servants.

5. Revamp education.

Najib must have the courage to make major changes in education. Education must first of all be secular and hold to principles of knowledge, research and inference. It needs to equip students not only with a base of know-how but also teach them how to think. It needs to liberate minds, aspirations and the human spirit. It needs to incorporate much better English education for our students and workers to plug into the rapid changes taking place in the world, for which access is unavailable in Malay. He needs to reintroduce the teaching of science and maths in English for a start.

He needs to look at ways and means to make education and particularly schools a unifying force where students of all races mix, make friends, appreciate and eventually celebrate and affirm our diversity, to become truly Malaysians no matter race or religion. For that he may have to seriously relook the multiple educational systems in the country to move towards a single school system which will nevertheless guarantee mother-tongue and religious education. All that needs considerable courage.

6. Fight Muhyiddin if he makes a challenge

The days of two-thirds majority and no opposition are gone, perhaps forever. Najib, as BN head, obtained a mandate, tenuous and as illegitimate as it may seem under the circumstances. If Muhyiddin Yassin wants to be PM let him get the mandate from the people directly. Najib must resist the temptation to make a deal. Umno delegates can remove him as party head and that would put paid to his premiership. If it comes to a fight, he should fight.

7. Restore fully personal freedom and civil rights.

All laws restricting personal rights and the right to information must be removed. That would include any restrictions on freedom of assembly, the conduct of which can be controlled by other laws. It would include the Official Secrets Act too and the Printing Presses and Publications Act as well as sedition laws whose scope should be considerably narrowed.

What we need is unfettered discussion of deep issues which need to be brought to the surface, resolved and reconciled. Without regular self-examination, criticism and reform, neither the individual nor state and society can progress. The idea that we can disagree peaceably without giving way to violence and build upon our agreements must be allowed to come forth and blossom.

8. Put down firmly and without compromise any attempt at violence

This is a corollary to the earlier point. For too long, Malaysians have been gagged by a threat to violence by what amounts to an extreme, small minority which deliberately creates incidents to stop the discussion of vital points affecting the country. The majority of Malaysians want free and fair expression and dissent to be permitted and are tired of being threatened.

Already, there are rumblings among some groups who want to create incidents in the wake of the elections. These groups must be firmly resisted and the full weight of the law thrown against them if they persist. Malaysians will no longer be held hostage.

9. Stop playing the race and religion cards

Race and religion are convenient cards to play when the game approaches deadlock. But it is not likely to hold currency much more. We need corruption out, we need efficiency in. We need to manage our resources for the betterment of all Malaysians and not let it go to cronies at the expense of the people. People recognise that playing the race and religion card is merely an attempt to camouflage that. Najib should clearly disassociate himself from Utusan Malaysia's racist stance and stand for a multi-racial Malaysia. Can there be any other Malaysia?

10. Keep his wife out of state and business affairs.

Stories about Najib's wife are reaching Imelda Marcos proportions. Her close association with state matters and fraternising with rich businessmen and big names is unprecedented for a Malaysian PM's wife. Her continued involvement with these and her constant presence in the socialite and even political and prominent news pages of mainstream newspapers (until some weeks before the general elections) will raise serious questions in the minds of Malaysians as to her role as the PM's wife. It is more than time that Najib put his foot down here.

There are of course other measures he must take. And if he can work with the opposition to bring about these changes, great. But if Najib or any other prime minister is not prepared to

implement these basic 10 measures, the least required for the functioning of a developed democracy working for the benefit of the people, then it is incumbent upon all of us to reject them at the next polls.