

Preparing for the politics of change
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NEW DIRECTION: Government policies and decisions will reflect a multiculturalist and corporatist approach

WITH the 13th General Election soundly behind him Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is now preparing Malaysians for the politics of change.

A modus vivendi has been found to deal with the MCA's non-participation in the new government. In the new cabinet announced on May 15, Najib moved to take the sting out of the issue.

As expected he included election winners from Sabah and Sarawak and those with tested experience in politics, corporate world and the professions.

With the choice made it is now revealed that the future of the country is no longer tied to the wobbly politics of race.

In its place the more vibrant politics of change will be applied and practised in all its multifaceted ways. In broad terms this means the formulation and execution of government policies and decisions will no longer favour just one racial group but will instead reflect a multiculturalist and corporatist approach.

Everything will be the subject of audit and evaluation. Each ringgit spent by the government will be thoroughly inspected and the books will remain necessarily open. Added to the open concept of governance being recognised here there will be a closer review undertaken periodically on all performance of government employees including officials and ministers. In short, with the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) application, the government hopes to instil the principles of integrity, accountability and transparency in all levels of the public service.

All of the above has in fact been implemented gradually by his predecessors but had picked up momentum when Najib became prime minister in 2009.

He saw the need to make the Government to be meticulously factual with numbers and hence more predictable and reliable. From then on standards, best practices, rankings, indicators and statistics must be the *raison d'etre* for all decision-making in the government.

Translated into real-time development three challenges await the new government as it moves to prepare Malaysians to meet the politics of change.

FIRSTLY, a new boldness is required to confront the race issue and going after the promise of change.

The fact of the end of the "social contract" no doubt will not be accepted comfortably by many.

They will look back at the efforts of our nation's founding fathers of Merdeka, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun H.S. Lee and Tun V.T. Sambanthan and recall the good and the bad times the country had gone through. But practicality and seriousness to commit ourselves to the task ahead must replace wasteful nostalgia.

That promise is premised on change big enough to overcome issues of race and ethnicity.

What better way than to make the new "El Dorados" of Sabah and Sarawak become the basis of a new social contract. Against the backdrop of a larger cooperation within the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) coming into being, the two eastern states will soon become the "new" centres of growth in the Pacific seaboard.

We will witness the likes of Los Angeles, Seattle and Hawaii in Kota Kinabalu, Kuching and also Labuan.

These can be our future points of entry into the country from the Pacific.

SECONDLY, complementing the development in the eastern part of the country, the challenge is for the government also to create new centres for the growth of halal industries away from the Klang Valley into locations in Johor, Pahang and Perak.

The focus needs to move from the present food-based to more content and standards innovation for the knowledge industries. Malaysia has the potential in becoming world leader in the development of content for the film, books and other multimedia-related industries.

In the future Malaysia can become a reference point for application of Islamic Content standards for the world equivalent to an "Islamic ISO".

THIRDLY, the challenge will emanate from the consequent competition that will come from the onset of the high-income economy. While the government will push more aggressively towards realising the goals of Vision 2020, Malaysians have to brace themselves

This is the price for us to enjoy better living standards and quality of life in the years to come.

Most importantly to enable us to swim with the tides of change we have to embrace change with passion and let go of emotional racial sentiments.

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