

A happy PM, but a sad nation
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In Seri Perdana, sits an increasingly happy and contented man.

Never mind that the country is witnessing early signs of anarchy. Never mind that Islamic religious authorities seem to be setting the agenda for this multiracial and secular country, threatening to do what Boko Haram is doing in Nigeria: destroying Bibles. Never mind that Malaysia is veering so far off course that even its most ardent defenders have lost faith... in everything.

In the serene enclave in Seri Perdana, all is well, according to those who have spoken to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak recently and some of his advisers. He does not wear the post-GE13 dead man walking look, the look of someone destined for the political scrap heap through a combination of his own ineptitude and the prodding of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, instigator-in-chief.

Why the new bright outlook? The PM and his inner circle believe:

* that the internal challenge from Umno for the top job in the country has all but dissipated with Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yasin disinterested in challenging for the top job in Umno and Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi not inclined to be the stooge of Dr Mahathir, a man who sacked him from Umno and detained him under the Internal Security Act.

So by sheer default and perhaps even cowardice on the part of Umno leaders, Najib looks secure as the Umno president and prime minister, foibles and flip-flops notwithstanding.

* that the push back from the centre against the Sultan of Johor's attempt to snare executive powers has painted him as a leader with a spine and gained some points for the PM across the country.

Putrajaya believes that the majority of Malays and Malaysians want the royal households to behave and yearn for the strong hand of Dr Mahathir in disciplining and curbing their ravenous appetite for power and projects.

And because the Sultan of Johor has been hemmed in by the centre, Najib feels that his government will pick up some brownie points and his image as a weak and indecisive politician will be rehabilitated somewhat.

* that the PM is untouched by the debate on cronyism sparked off by YTL's Tan Sri Francis Yeoh's infamous speech several weeks ago.

At a Global Malaysia series forum run by Pemandu, the tycoon had allegedly said that 85% of YTL's businesses were in Britain, Singapore and Australia because these countries did not tolerate corruption, and practised meritocracy and stood for the rule of law.

He added that in these countries, he did not have to kow-tow to a prime minister before a deal is done. Yeoh later clarified that his words were misrepresented but even a mea culpa did not stop the savage attack against him that followed, leading to searching questions being asked about the YTL's involvement in a power plant in Johor.

Najib's team believe that little muck from this debate on cronyism will attach itself to the PM since Yeoh is generally identified as a beneficiary of the Mahathir era.

* that the victory in the Teluk Intan by-election suggests that the worst is over for Barisan Nasional (BN).

So at least in Putrajaya, the feeling is that all is well.

How out-of-touch is this man and his phalanx of advisers? He may be safe from a challenge in Umno but the country is imploding. No one seems to be in charge.

Court decisions are ignored. A ruling by the Attorney-General (A-G) is snubbed by religious authorities. And every day there is a threat being issued by one group of Malaysians against another group of Malaysians.

The East Malaysians are restless. Sandwiched in between all this are state-abetted acts of thievery and plundering on a scale not seen before.

No wonder a latest survey indicates that a very high percentage of Malaysians feel that the country is headed in the wrong direction.

The PM's personal approval rating is still hovering around the 50% mark.

Yet, the occupant of Seri Perdana believes things are getting better. Last night, he issued a statement ostensibly to add some weight to the stalemate issue of seized Malay and Iban-language Bibles that first began on January 2.

Najib asked everyone to respect the A-G's decision not to charge the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM) with keeping the Bibles.

He also urged the Selangor Islamic Religious Council (Mais) to discuss with the A-G if it feels that the decision should be reviewed, adding that the solution to the issue should be based on the provisions and spirit of the country's constitution and law, so that it would be accepted by society.

That's what he said, without giving any idea where he stood on the matter.

The simple fact is that we have a weak Prime Minister; an occasional PM. –
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