

## **Najib has upper hand in shallow national politics**

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**Malaysia's politics is shallow and the nation does not have a culture where politicians who will bear responsibility for the next generation sharpen one another in friendly rivalry, says report.**

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Najib Razak appears to have the upper hand in the ugly feud between him and predecessor Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

This is because Najib has built up a stable political base, according to a report in the Nikkei Asian Review (NAR), which also suggests Malaysia's politics has yet to mature.

Noting that Dr Mahathir had teamed up with his jailed nemesis Anwar Ibrahim to unseat Najib, the report said Mahathir could not hide the shrinking of his political clout while Anwar, although still popular, could not run for office from prison.

But, the report said, the Najib government had a major Achilles' heel in the scandal surrounding state fund 1Malaysia Development Bhd.

It said that the ties between Mahathir, Najib and Anwar not only showed the fierceness of Malaysia's power struggle, but exposed the shallowness of its political benches.

"Since it won independence in 1957, the country has not undergone a significant change of government, and it has not cultivated a culture in which the politicians that will bear responsibility for the next generation sharpen one another in friendly rivalry," it noted.

The NAR report also noted that with its per capita gross domestic product having reached the US\$10,000 level, Malaysia was at a crossroads and in need of a new growth model.

"Its ruling and opposition parties are constantly bickering instead of engaging in more robust economic debate, casting doubt on the nation's hopes of joining the ranks of the world's developed countries."

The report gave details about how Mahathir, who had ruled Malaysia for 22 years through 2003, had become so critical of Najib, his earlier sacking of Anwar and the present situation where Mahathir has teamed up with Anwar.

It quoted Mahathir telling the UK's The Guardian recently that Anwar had been "unfairly treated," and that "...I think the incoming government would be able to persuade the king to give a full pardon for Anwar". A statement that, it said, had sent shock waves across the country.

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