

Najib is too soft, says Daim Zainuddin
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KINIBIZ Former finance minister Daim Zainuddin feels that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak should firm up.

"What they (people on the ground) want is strong leadership," he told *KiniBiz*, revealing that based on feedback he has received personally, many feel Najib is neither firm nor decisive enough.

Notably during the conversation Daim was emphatic about Malaysians turning serious attention to the country's political situation "for the first time" and criticised the government's weakness in dealing with inflation as well as agents provocateurs seeking to create religious tension.

However, Daim was also critical of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who he says "has never been able to solve any problem" even when part of the government.

Overall, the former Umno treasurer feels that Anwar is also a weak leader.

Daim was speaking to *KiniBiz* in a rare face-to-face interview last week, during which he shared his take on a variety of subjects.

In the first part of the series, *KiniBiz* focuses on the political aspect of the interview.

Notably, when speaking to the man there is a hint of toughness despite Daim's cordial, friendly manner underscored by his simple cotton shirt and slippers.

Occasionally there was a glint of steel in his eyes as he broached certain subjects - opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, for instance.

The stark contrast between his demeanour and the glimpses of the hardened man inside mirrors that of the unremarkable building in which his office is located and the lush interior space, adorned by myriad artworks from his personal collection.

Barely seated after brief introductions, the man pops the question: "Why are you writing about me?"

That was perhaps to be expected given how he has shunned the limelight for so many years.

The Daim Interview Part 1 – Leadership issues

Are you more invested in cash now?

(Declined to say, laughing) Then people would interpret and say... (still laughing)

You don't want to do the same thing you did in 1994 (referring to a statement he made in 1994 about the stock market being overvalued which led to a crash).

It is not easy to answer. If you have cashed out, of course there is inflation and exchange rate etc, there is a big problem. But I would not be investing, not at this stage.

In the stock market, you mean?

(Laughing) At this stage.

Is that because of economic fundamentals or is it because of the political situation in the country?

Both, not only just here but also overseas where there are political issues too.

For the first time in history, people are looking seriously at the political situation here — seriously looking at it. They want to know what's happening. And if you see foreigners writing (about Malaysia), they're beginning to doubt the stability of the country.

I think what they want to see is strong leadership. And they perceive that there isn't one.

So there isn't a strong leadership at the moment?

This is not me (saying), I'm talking about foreigners. They are questioning.

Do you think that the leadership is weak?

I'm a strong supporter of the government (laughing). And I have been criticising the government but sometimes they misinterpret it, thinking that I oppose the government — I don't.

What we want is to make sure that the government is moving in the right direction, that people have confidence in the government and support the government. But people want to see, they want to feel comfortable with the government. And I think that the majority — if you go to the ground — feels that something is not right somewhere.

But it is for the government now to make the assessment, not for me.

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