

## **Change, but change meaningfully**

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THE prime minister said last week that a government-linked investment company did not achieve its aim of furthering the bumiputra agenda.

I'm not sure if Khazanah Nasional Bhd even had the duty of furthering the agenda but the board needs to explain how on earth a venture into women's lingerie was considered a good deal at RM80 million. But more importantly, which company?

However, when you vacate the entire board of directors and then place the prime minister and a member of his cabinet on the board it leaves a bad taste.

Yes, it is a government-linked investment corporation but so was 1Malaysia Development Bhd.

1MDB had a board with political patronage as well – a mix of politicians and corporate sector individuals – it still did not bode well. Thus, why involve politicians in these investment corporations?

Surely after saying that there was enough talent within Pakatan Harapan and its corporate allies; there must be enough people to fill those posts and be professional about it?

There must be a separation of government and business to avoid patronage and nepotism, and remove the risk of conflict of interest. It must be said that GLCs as well as their investment corporations – Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB), Khazanah Nasional, and even the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) – should be free of political influence.

This is especially important for the PNB and EPF because these are the savings of Malaysians.

One excuse is that this is how the companies have been run. Well, the majority of Malaysians voted to change things that have gone awry.

After all, for many years we witnessed Pakatan lawmakers facing the accusation that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim when he was finance minister made the decisions that they opposed. And during those years, Datuk Seri Wan Azizah would say "if it was bad, why not change it?"

The same question now applies to Pakatan Harapan. Why not change decisions that do not tally with their internal beliefs of reducing the power of the prime minister and removing every single thing they opposed when they weren't in power?

Why do we still debate child marriages when some 40-plus-year-old marries an 11-year-old, claiming he has been in love with the girl since she was seven?

How can you promise EPF deductions for housewives from their husbands' accounts without knowing the law doesn't allow it?

Why is it more important to amend the constitution to guarantee internet access when no one has been held responsible over a telco leak reported ages ago?

How is it that we can cancel public transport projects and yet, still go about reconsidering a third national car company, forcing people to pay for fuel, maintenance, road tax, insurance and even the tolls which are supposed to be abolished in stages?

There are a lot of things still pending for this government and while we do want to give them leeway for being new at their jobs, the ideas being generated are outdated and some are silly. Do we really need to debate black versus white school shoes when we need education reform?

The new ruling coalition needs to buck up soon because the changes promised to its supporters look sillier by the day.

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