

MY SAY: Accountable politicians needed

Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

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WANTED — for failing our democracy." This is a full-page advertisement placed in the respected daily, *The Guardian* (UK, March 22), referring to a group of named Members of Parliament who allegedly committed the "stated crime".

"The days of the rotten Parliament are almost over. The fight for a reforming Parliament begins now," the ad claims.

The ad is a clear demonstration of how critical of the performance of some of their elected representatives some sections of British society have become. Though six were singled out and their "mug shots" published, the ad said there are many like them who "have stood in the way of cleaning up and reforming our politics". "No matter what their party, if they're an MP who has blocked democratic reform or attacked civil liberties, they'll be held to account for their record," it said emphatically.

For some time now, we have been reading about the antics of British politicians. Most recently, *The Guardian* reported on its front page a call for a probe into certain politicians and their access and influence to lobby in return for cash (although this has been reportedly denied by some). No doubt, this also has something to do with the coming British national election in May. Regardless, the ad seems to be a good indication of the fact that something has gone terribly wrong for too long and that the electorate is no longer willing to sit back and accept the whims and fancies of politicians, whatever their hue. The message clearly shows there is a limit to tolerating a "rotten Parliament" in a so-called mature democracy.

The response would have been the same in any democratic society — mature or otherwise. In fact, more so in the latter case due to the gap in the understanding and expectations of democracy between the electorate and the elected. The premise is, just because the electorate and the public are not "educated" enough about their democratic rights, it does not mean they should be short-changed by the elected representatives. In fact, the latter remain ethically bound to protect those rights and not abuse them, recognising full well the cliché that politics is the art of the possible.

Meanwhile, Malaysian politics seems to have reached an all-time low, be it in Parliament or otherwise. We could be heading for a "rotten Parliament", too, given what we have seen and heard for some time now. Even the King's reminder to MPs to behave themselves seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

It seems Malaysia, too, could easily draw up its own "WANTED" list, based on the failure of the MPs to deliver democracy in a meaningful way. Unfortunately, there has been too much politicking to gain cheap political mileage, dubious publicity and short-term goals. Friends and enemies are almost interchangeable, flip-flopping time and again in an attempt to extract the most political gains. Unbridled ambition and ego border on deception and lies.

Like the UK public, Malaysians are increasingly disillusioned by how our political scenario has degenerated, making utter nonsense of the fruits of democracy. Although most likely no one cares enough to waste their money on putting up a similar ad (assuming that someone would want to publish it), it does not mean the public can be taken for granted. Or that they will tolerate a "rotten Parliament" as an outcome of shallow political mindsets.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is scheduled to announce the New Economic Model (NEM) to hasten the country's development into advanced nation status as envisaged in the Vision 2020 blueprint. It will also mark the day this nation commits itself to turning around the existing situation into something far better. And we have full confidence this is within our grasp.

Nevertheless, it is contingent on the kind of political scenarios we must evolve towards in parallel with the new economic agenda. To be sure, NEM can only be realised through a new political model, and not a rotten one. For this to happen, political behaviour must first change drastically to commensurate with the transformational change that is demanded of the country and its citizens.

And this is the reform that needs to take place first and fast at the individual level on the political scene, failing which Malaysia will rot, and as the ad in *The Guardian* reminds us, the politicians will be held accountable for their record.

So, please be forewarned. Enough is enough.

* The writer is the Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia. He can be contacted at vc@usm.my

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