

25/04/2001

Get rid of the running dogs

Abdullah Ahmad

YB Muhammad Tulus is the antithesis of YB Zig Zag. The relatively new MP is not a fool because he does not take to himself the respect that is given to his office. The thirty-something legislator lives simply (only one maid and a cook). He is neither poor nor rich. He and his family eat food which is convenient for them. He and the family take local holidays.

Though in the thick of Umno politics, he has never been involved in money politics nor has a dirty tricks department. He cannot afford a think tank.

He is where he is simply because he is perceived as a man with some considerable future, clean, not slippery; doesn't know how to fake things or massage statistics. He accepts criticism with the aplomb of a good guru. YB Muhammad Tulus is perceptive enough not to hire or surround himself with persons of questionable commitment and integrity.

If all running dogs had read Machiavelli and Swift, well, they would have known how and when to lie most effectively.

Running dogs have been fawning, lying and spying for as long as they have been talking. Though old, many still do.

I pity them, but at times I find it hard to repress laughter and even admiration at their audacity to appear otherwise.

Running dogs, like liars, will do anything to impress people, especially the naive, through spin, and even fiction, about their paymaster, no matter how discredited the master has become.

They can wait for as long as they want or can endure, but all come down to one and the same thing: one cannot hide wrongdoings far too long. We know what we know are true. As a Malay proverb says - "Mulut tempayan boleh ditutup masakan mulut manusia" - you can seal the lid of a jar but no one can stop people from talking and verifying what they have heard, nor a really bad body odour, no matter what body lotion or perfume is applied.

Many years ago when I was in government, a particular toady began to fawn on me, saying the right thing about me, my friends and allies.

He wanted me to induct him into my small circle of friends, he desired to be embraced, politically speaking. I was warned in time by well-meaning friends and associates not to touch this valet!

The devil incarnate has appeared and is taking the customary route.

Who are running dogs? They are like fellow travellers, those who accept most of the communist, Umno, Pas, DAP, Keadilan and even Party Rakyat doctrines and policies, but are not members of the parties though they work and accept money from those parties or individuals in the organisations.

They do not work publicly for these individuals. Running dogs work on the basis that people are generally stupid. Of course, some individuals succumb to their seduction.

Of late, there are many running dogs working for individual politicians. Perhaps, the Securities Commission, or even the Anti-Corruption Agency, should look into this: Who pays them? The individuals, or some public-listed companies coerced, cajoled or even ordered into creating jobs for them?

Members of Parliament and the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, should look into this fast because if unchecked, this can bring disrepute to the corporate bodies involved.

Not a very long time ago, many running dogs were paid out by companies to work for a particular leader. That leader's example has been followed by some, and I hope it stops just at getting corporate coffers to pay for their operatives.

Running dogs with some exception are generally reputed to be also foreign agents. If we do not nip the menace in the bud, it will manifest and create chaos during the next very crucial Umno presidential election or the war of succession.

Dr Mahathir talks about the deadly danger of money politics all the time and is now even thinking of preventing rich Bumiputeras from buying power in Umno (and ultimately into government). All I can say is I strongly support him even though it has come rather late in the day.

As people say, it is better late than never. Money politics must be stamped out before the final war of succession starts and becomes ferocious. I wonder why one or two politicians are rather defensive over rich Malays holding positions in Umno. Anything the matter?

I quite understand and even appreciate why Dr Mahathir is so angry with some Umno members and even with a few senior leaders who are only interested in what they can get out of the Umno-led Government, not at all dedicated to the party.

Permit me to borrow from what Leon Trotsky once said of the communists, "...communist (read Umno) leaders are not the artists of the communist (Umno) principles, but only its artistic fellow travellers."

Many people, after joining Umno, have benefited hugely from it, and I believe deep in their hearts they do not very much care what happens to the party. Make hay while the sun shines. They have ruthlessly used (disregarding everything) Umno for personal gains.

I am using the attack phrase to warn Umno leaders - many of whom are sincere and good - to be aware of the arrogance of power of a certain group of ruling politicians who try to manipulate and spin events through their running dogs (and makeover).

The running dogs will scratch their master's back and he scratches the bootlickers', but normally he soothes them with money.

If the lackey syndrome continues and we benignly tolerate it, more party and government leaders will abandon what is left of party principles in them. But I know if the heat is on, many will get out on their own.

As President Truman would said: they would not had been able to stand the heat.

There are proxy wars within the ruling coalition, in Umno and MCA in particular. Active are the running dogs who are whipping up animosity among contending candidates for the leadership and the ultimate prize, the premiership of this nation.

But before that, they must first win the proxy wars and capture the post of deputy prime minister, an appointment entirely at the discretionary power of the Prime Minister.

Tun Razak chose Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman as his deputy in 1970 though Dr Ismail was neither deputy nor vice-president of Umno.

There you are, there is a precedent. Dr Ismail was one of the best No 2 this country ever had. I had the fortune of working with him and I still recall the experience with great pride.

He was an honest and a capable Malay, and above all a good Malaysian.

Dr Mahathir is moving in the right direction. Unless he acts sternly and quickly while he is still strong and powerful, these "brush-fire wars" can only spread to the detriment of the nation.

Dr Mahathir can't afford not to act against money politics, abuse of power, corruption, decadence and high living. Otherwise, we will never rise to become a vigorous, progressive and developed nation by 2020.

In the end, every prime minister and president of Umno, no matter how eager to please his constituencies or to maintain status quo, has to make this tough decision.

I have no doubt that with a bit of will, patience and skilful diplomacy, (and if necessary the use of a big stick), his sincere efforts will succeed in easing out the Malaysian Malaise.

Bold action by Dr Mahathir will not raise the political temperature in Umno. Instead, it will be welcomed by those within and outside the ruling party.

Umno members must, in good measure, also accept their share of the blame for the way the ruling party has suffered reverses.

I am sorry at the fact that we have shown precious little will power and inclination to do anything substantial against the corrupt, the inefficient, deadwood, running dogs, individuals and institutions that habitually spread and publish slanted stories about us.

It is the Government's duty to defend the interest and integrity of the people who elected BN in the 1999 general election.

However, Dr Mahathir has another and far harder task to perform: to ensure BN wins the next polls; in order to do that he has to persuade those millions voting for the first time, and the women, that BN is their defender, protector and friend, not an opponent, the enemy or an oppressor.

(END)