

**Good cop, bad cop routine**  
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Although former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad may seem to be critical of Prime minister Najib Abdul Razak's "1Malaysia", both have the same political agenda. - to keep Umno in power and to champion race politics.

Mahathir (right) refuses to retire from the political scene and continues to shoot from behind the lines and confound his many critics.

Mahathir and Najib are only playing the "good cop, bad cop" routine. Mahathir and his gang of thugs, Perkasa, scare the living daylights out of most Malaysians and especially the Malays.

So what do they do? They run gratefully into the arms of Najib because on the surface, his political rhetoric seems less confrontational.

Notice how Mahathir seems to pop up at crucial times in Najib's political history like when his support is flagging, during by-elections or when the Opposition is making inroads into the political scene.

**Campaign trail**

Last weekend, Ummi Hafilda Ali, Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's nemesis, went on the campaign trail in the recent by-elections and was overgenerous in her praises for Mahathir. She even claimed to be an avowed Mahathirist.

Mahathir featured in most of her speeches and she was unashamed about her admiration for him and how no one else could hold a candle to him.

Ummi's (left) rallying cry of "Hidup Mahathir" actually saw the Umno crowd standing up and shouting along with her. Thugs had infiltrated into the crowd with the intent of being "cheerleaders" to initiate the mindless chanting of "Hidup Mahathir" and "Hidup Umno".

Last November, the camaraderie between Mahathir and former International trade and industry minister Rafidah Aziz was both embarrassing and shocking.

These two had spectacularly fallen out in 2005 over her abuse of the Approved Permits for the importation of cars.

But when Umno is desperate, even adversaries will unite. Najib needs all the help he can get because if Umno falls, all these former leaders will fall like tenpins. One falls and he will implicate the others.

Support for Najib is more critical now than at any time in Malaysia's history because of events in the middle-east and north Africa. The people of the Islamic nations have shown another side to their psyche.

They are refusing to countenance rule by dictators and they will not subject themselves to a living hell of corruption, abuse at the hands of the secret police, increased food prices and

oppressive governments.

While Tunisia and Egypt have been swayed by people power, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi (right) of Libya is digging his heels in and refuses to be toppled. Najib is perhaps influenced and encouraged by that strong stance of the Libyan despot.

Mahathir did his bit of stifling dissent in the late 80s in Operation Lalang but claimed that none of that was his doing, the police were beyond his control.

### **Revolutionary hero**

Perhaps the key to understanding Mahathir is his time in Singapore where he studied medicine. It was there that his worst fears were realised. The Malays were dispossessed of their own country.

Then later, in the late 60s and 70s, Mahathir must have been seen as a revolutionary hero, fighting for the freedom of the Malay people - never mind that many did not consider him a Malay but they felt energised and were probably fearful of his leadership. Perhaps that is why many leaders were reluctant to criticise him.

Since his resignation, most of the world has moved on, and the country's "look east" policy has changed unlike during Mahathir's time, but Mahathir's outlook on race, has remained the same.

Whilst the Opposition politicians are fighting the twin evils of corruption and racism, Najib and Mahathir probably think these critics are "traitors".

In Mahathir's 22 years of premiership, many contend that he has done more damage than good to our country's economy.

Was it not he who allowed his cronies the freedom to siphon the country's wealth?

Under his premiership, few if any, of those in responsible and important positions, who were in charge of billions of dollars worth of the country's resources, were accountable to anyone. It's thought by some that Mahathir's power and influence were instrumental in the many cover-ups.

Much of the country's finances were sidelined for projects which had little economic value.

He may have claimed credit for corruption being at its lowest during his tenure but if people were rarely investigated or even convicted, for corruption, then of course the rates for corruption would be considered low.

It is like the current state of affairs with our policemen. Many believe they are so ineffective in solving crime, that few people bother making a police report. Hence, the police and statistics department translates this as "effective policing" resulting in a "low crime rate."

### **Forays were fiascos**

Mahathir's forays into the commodity and forex markets were fiascos. He thought he could outsmart others and force up the price of tin by restricting supply.

As tin prices rose, the Russians released their vast stocks of tin onto the world's markets.

Tin prices fell and have never recovered. As a result most Malaysian tin mines closed as they were no longer profitable.

Mahathir may have physically left the active political scene of Putrajaya, but his political domination continues in the form of Perkasa.

As we lurch into the final lap of the race to the general election, we can expect more of the same from Mahathir, be it in the form of Perkasa, Ummi Hafilda Ali or the man himself.

Mahathir and Najib (right) have always concentrated on the question of how to grab more of the national cake, rather than how to make it grow bigger.

Mahathir and Najib both champion mega-projects and even though our country is close to scraping the bottom of the barrel, both know that there is plenty of "commission" baksheesh that can be gained for a mega-project.

Najib seems determined to test the theory that the country can never go bankrupt.

Professor Tony Hawkins of the University of Zimbabwe once observed: "Whenever economics gets in the way of politics, politics wins every time."

Unlike Mahathir, Najib is now faced with a strong opposition. Both Najib and Mahathir seem intent on wrecking our economy with political control and by pursuing affirmative action policies, which are popular with some Malays.

In political terms, Mahathir has outsmarted his enemies. Even though Najib has the title, it is Mahathir who is still in power.

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