

## **Money politics ends Ku Li's final quest**

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**By Terence Netto**

COMMENT Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, perennial striver for the integral posts of premier of Malaysia and Umno president, has had his latest bid to realise what he regards as his manifest destiny rendered abortive.

The ostensible cause of failure is money politics, ironically the very phenomenon that, a little over two years ago, a memoir published by a nemesis of his had accused the Gua Musang MP of being responsible for its incidence in Umno.

NONE 'A Doctor in the House', Dr Mahathir Mohamad's memoir of his life and times launched in early March, 2011, claimed that Razaleigh, who has eyed the Umno No 1 post for more than three decades, had engaged in money politics in the seminal 1987 Umno contest for the top posts in the party's triennial elections.

Razaleigh responded with alacrity to the slur, denouncing the attribution of responsibility to him for Umno's besetting vice as "political lying."

He mocked the publication of Mahathir's memoirs even as he launched, in mid-March 2011, a book on Professor Wang Gangwu, entitled 'Junzi', a Mandarin term that connotes the scholar-gentleman.

Razaleigh, popularly known as 'Ku Li', was decidedly ungentlemanly in the sideswipes he took at Mahathir's book while commenting on the one about Prof Wang, who like the Kelantanese politician-prince, was a former student of the Anderson School in Ipoh, where the 'Junzi' book launch was held.

On that occasion, praising Prof Wang for his "intellectual honesty", Razaleigh had observed: "This is a rare commodity, particularly in the political atmosphere that we face today in Malaysia where political lying has become pervasive."

Mr Moneybags intervenes

Apparently, two years on from those scalding remarks, pertinent observation had become obtrusive reality: Razaleigh's renewed bid for the premiership of the country - in the face of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's current pallor, Muhyiddin Yassin's evident timorousness and Anwar Ibrahim's induced stall - had gathered some pace earlier this month only to run into the roadblock of money politics.

A financier - the same one who was deployed in Perak in February 2009 to depose the Pakatan Rakyat state government of Mohd Nizar Jamaluddin - was summoned to the rescue as the initial group of 12 MPs, from Sabah and Sarawak, that had met with Razaleigh over lunch in Kuala Lumpur two weeks ago, snowballed by the end of last week to 30 MPs who were willing to take a chance with a leader whose Charles de Gaulle-like sense of personal destiny has not dimmed with the passage of time and with repeated failure.

The 30 BN MPs would have been beefed up by defections from the PAS contingent of 21 MPs had not the party's president Abdul Hadi Awang set his face firmly against the move to back Razaleigh.

NONEHadi's stance was surprising, given that he hitherto had behaved like a canoeist, paddling on both sides in the rapids that had for the last five years beset his party, as one faction moved from favouring unity talks with Umno, to suggesting that Razaleigh (right) rather than Anwar Ibrahim be the PM-designate for Pakatan Rakyat should the latter gain the keys to Putrajaya.

This faction was opposed by another that was unwavering in support of the PKR supremo as their candidate for PM.

Hadi is the huge surprise of the 2013 political season, the oscillations to his pendulum having given equal hope to the vying factions of his party that he was favouring them.

In the crunch, he had gone with the principle of what he sensed that 51 percent of the Malaysian electorate had wanted in Election 2013 - change.

Hadi decided Anwar, more than Razaleigh, represents the will of the majority of those Malaysians who voted in GE13 on May 5.

Writing his memoirs

Last Saturday, in Jakarta, at the importuning of the intermediary, former Indonesian vice-president Jusuf Kalla, Anwar declined Najib's proffer of a deal that would have ended the life of Pakatan.

While all that was going on in Jakarta, Mr Moneybags, the BN financier, as he did in Perak four years ago, got the lucre out to squelch the looming bolt of MPs from the BN stable to a nascent Razaleigh insurgency.

In the national political bourse, the going rate these days for inducement for a

change in leader-allegiance is RM5 million.

The financier was set back a cool RM150 million, small change in these days when BN's kleptocracy can turn obscure hamsters on the business treadmill into malefactors of great wealth.

Now, Razaleigh, at a ripe 76, may finally come to accept the end of his seemingly unending quest for the premiership of the country and the necessity of writing his memoirs which he will, no doubt, try to avoid being regarded as an exercise in mendacity, like an earlier effort of the man inclined to blame others for faults that could properly be laid at his door.

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