

COMMENT | Muhyiddin, it's time to cut and cut cleanly

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COMMENT | Many will surely remember these words of US Senator Paul Laxalt to Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos in the dying hours of his presidency that fateful night on Feb 25, 1986.

“Mr President, I think you should cut and cut cleanly. I think the time has come,” Laxalt responded to Marcos when the latter asked the senator over the phone, “Should I step down? Senator, what do you think?”

It was 3am in Manila and a beleaguered and desperate Marcos was attempting his utmost to cling on to power. But to Washington and then-president Ronald Reagan, it was clear that Marcos had lost the support of Filipinos and Corazon Aquino had won the election.

It was at that poignant moment that Marcos seemed to realise that his downfall was inevitable. People's power had won in the Philippines.

“He was hanging on,” Laxalt said. “He was looking for a life preserver. I sensed he was a desperate man clutching at straws.”

Somehow today, I have this strange feeling of putting Muhyiddin Yassin in the same shoes as the late Marcos in 1986. Perhaps, students of political science could draw some comparisons too.

The scale and tension of the uprising during the era of the Philippines dictator might not be the same but there are many other similarities.

Top of it all is Muhyiddin’s desperate attempt to cling on to power today; even when he is aware that it is slowly but surely slipping through his fingers.

There are many ways to win political battles especially if you are in power. You can easily beat your opponents by abusing power, buying support or cheating at the ballot box. Who cares, anything to achieve victory! Let’s be honest - that’s the way it is, isn’t it?

However, when the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Malay rulers are no longer seen to be on your side, then you have a very serious issue at hand.

This is the most sticky predicament for Muhyiddin and his Perikatan Nasional

administration in his 15 months in power. If there is anything that could break Muhyiddin and his government, it is this recent directive from the king to reopen Parliament as soon as possible.

The king has also made it clear – the emergency will not extend beyond Aug 1. Well, it is known to all why Muhyiddin wanted the emergency in the first place.

This time, Mr Prime Minister, offering cabinet posts and GLC positions will not work. Neither will enticing crossovers from the opposition.

There is also no point in issuing ‘diplomatic’ statements from the Prime Minister’s Office, declaring that the rulers’ advice has been duly noted and the government would act constitutionally on the matter. I think such obvious acts of courteous appeasement sound rather childish and pathetic.

I’m seriously worried for this country if you have a prime minister “who is desperately clutching at straws looking for a life preserver”. Who is surprised that Muhyiddin is in that exact limbo today?

And also to borrow from Senator Laxalt: “Please, Mr Muhyiddin, it’s time to cut and cut cleanly”. And may I add: “Do not make things more difficult for yourself as it is. You have tried to combat the Covid-19 pandemic but have failed. It’s time

to let someone else handle it."

Too monumental

Interestingly, just last month, I had expressed both my sympathy and empathy here for Muhyiddin. I understood his feelings and had experienced what and how he must have felt when he was abused by the public for his incompetence at handling the pandemic.

Today, I find it necessary to go all the way to request Muhyiddin to do the honourable thing – step aside.

We, Malaysians, have to acknowledge that we are now facing three major crises – one, a seemingly unbeatable devil virus in front and two, extreme political tension lurking behind.

Thirdly, I believe that we could be staring at a possible constitutional crisis if things are not handled sensibly and appropriately in the days and weeks ahead.

We need a new leader and a new team urgently to pull the nation through these tumultuous times. With due respect to Muhyiddin, I don't think he is the right man to helm the nation today. The tasks are too monumental for him to handle.

Even with 32 ministers and 37 deputy ministers (what a bloated cabinet!), Muhyiddin has not been able to deliver. The past year has proven that he is not PM material. Perhaps he never was.

The political polemics within his PN coalition plus the little support from tired and weary Malaysians will not put Muhyiddin in the right frame of mind to govern effectively.

Let me respectfully inform Muhyiddin that judging from public feedback over the past 15 months, he and his PN coalition do not have the support of the majority of Malaysians to continue leading the nation.

What is made much more difficult for the prime minister now is the different line taken by the king and his brother rulers on when Parliament should reconvene.

To fellow Malaysians, when a leader fails us, we have to vote him (if not force him) out, irrespective of which coalition he represents. That is our sacred duty as responsible citizens to ensure that democracy remains the guiding light and shining beacon for our nation.

Ferdinand Marcos thought he could win a new term by calling for snap elections in 1986 only to be humiliated and forced into exile by his fellow Filipinos.

Dear Mr Muhyiddin, please don't do a Marcos and end up like him. My gut feeling tells me that you will never be prime minister after the next election.

And for the second and final time, let me borrow from Laxalt: "Mr Prime Minister Muhyiddin, I think you should cut and cut cleanly. I think the time has come."

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