

Is Umno in a self-implosion mood?

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An atomic (or nuclear) explosion occurs as the radioactive ingredients concoct to accelerate particle movements and bombardments to create an implosion (instead of the conventional explosion) of particles and molecules of the device, thus creating a chain reaction that amplifies the energy (not to mention radioactivity) to preposterous levels. Thus a simple device can create such a horrendous and long-lasting damage that the world today is engaged in the whys' and why nots' of having this device as a fail-safe deterrent to threat.

In Malaysia currently the debate for safe nuclear technology exemplifies the concerns and fears of Malaysians to the destructive capabilities of nuclear as opposed to its actually carbon free and environmental friendly limitless power should it be used safely. The wisdom of whether we are ready or not for it shall continue to be debated, though it may take some time to actually happen ...maybe a very, very long time.

This is rocket science so many may not be able to gauge its true meaning. But to give an easier to understand example, let us take a more homely and vastly followed matter to elaborate - Umno. What nuclear implosion can cause to the environment (not to mention living beings) Umno seems to be following it to the letter. Still hard to fathom? Here's the easy explanation.

Umno doesn't act like wine - if wine grows and tastes better with age Umno seems to be more stale and bitter with age. A 64-year old wine would already be labelled vintage; but a 64-year old Umno can only be described as pathetic. Whilst its top leaders (who fail to see the new politics unfolding before their eyes) brash around the nation about its accomplishments and history, it seems some leaders at the grassroots level are more concerned with their petty squabbling and inner demons rather than addressing the needs of the rakyat.

The recent spate of reports citing infighting, money politics and alleged rebellion among the ranks justify many Malaysians' views of the chaotic state this once revered party is in at the present. In Kelantan, many of its members are already confined to the belief that until and unless the present PAS-led government loses its Islamist image, there can never be a day of Umno to return to power there.

A recently concluded divisional meeting there had to be repeated for reasons allegedly involving an attempt to undermine the leadership. This may or may not be the case, but suspicions grew when other divisions in other states began to follow this route.

In Kedah for example, an Umno divisional meeting was allegedly interrupted by calls from the members against one of its own who happens to be working with the president. Kedah unfortunately is heading the Kelantan way, although religion has got nothing to do with the state of affairs there. Umno members at the grassroots level feel that the leadership of the state is going nowhere, since it is being led by an outsider although he is a party deputy president.

Sadly for them, they are poor with choice. A member alleged that about 10 of the state's divisional Umno heads do not even reside in Kedah, let alone make paltry visits to serve the constituencies. Coupled with the alleged rebellion, and nearly followed by another division (which allegedly was foiled by invisible hands), Umno seems set to again lose Kedah. And the leadership squabble is heating up with several camps formed and each not on talking

terms with another.

Backstabbing and name-calling have become a norm there and unfortunately the man tasked to bring control to the state is unable to do so due to his outsider status. What is worse is that his popularity and leadership is adversely affected by the sequence of events – that even his own standing in his native state is compromised. And there are also calls for a new leadership to be appointed from among the state itself, and this has escalated the small yet self-destructive civil war.

We go to Sabah next. The alleged war between the state's two most influential Umno groups heated up recently when one group began to distribute a 'dossier' of sorts reportedly on allegations of mismanagement and corruption against the leader of the other group. This dossier was not only distributed internally, but also to other BN components, and this has escalated tensions to the extent that development for the poor state has been impeded and delayed. This not only irked Umno members, it has raised an outcry from other component allies as well as the impoverished people whose needs should have superseded any claims for power and unfortunately money.

Then there's Perak, where Umno is still trying to repair its image over allegations of buying over certain seats to wrest control of the state from the opposition. Whilst the new MB is toiling to prove that he is more than just a former alleged ally of one Anwar Ibrahim, leaders not favouring him are leading calls for his replacement. At the same time, many are also of the view that unless real balanced development is brought into the state soon, a return to the opposition in the next elections is a foregone conclusion. And at present there seems to be no salvation on that front.

Let's not forget about Terengganu, where the Deputy Prime Minister and also Deputy Umno President publicly cry foul over the absence of four state representatives to an Umno divisional meeting in Setiu. Internal rebellion over the appointment of the new MB perhaps? Wow, it seems Umno members have lost its Islamic touch of to forgive and to forget – they are more vengeful than ever it seems. It can be concluded that there are also similar frictions in other divisions in the state, and again unfortunately for Umno, it is being led by an outsider, though not as far as from the land beneath the wind.

These infighting examples are not just what Umno is facing at the moment. A report in the newspapers recently may not surprise many. It is about money politics, that an Umno member who was a former parliamentarian was trying to buy votes to get a seat for the upcoming general assembly in a division. Talk about cheap politics! Can you imagine money transferring hands for such a small token? This is paltry Umno at its lowest ebb and we hope the MACC (which is already saddled with ridicule and contempt by many) will bring to light the perpetrator soon.

What will happen when the real deal – party elections proper happens? We can safely conclude more money will transfer hands, money that could have been well spent on arresting the pariah problem of urban poverty in the federal territories. We can also deduce that this incident may not be an isolated case.

There is also disillusionment among the Youth ranks, as can be felt when its chief (who allegedly is not in the good books of the president) points to the way that he is exiting the door soon. The ongoing public spat against one Kalimullah Hassan over allegations that Kalimullah was one of the people responsible to try and undermine the president's leadership before and his connections with the youth chief may speed up that decision. If this is true, then backstabbing and 'political' assassinations can be added to Umno's ever

growing resume of myopia.

In conclusion, these factors coupled with the leadership's failure to launch (err, failure to capture the rakyat's vision that is) are creating a chain of events that is not only making Umno a laughing stock, but also creating disunity among the ranks and further isolation from the public. This chain of events is similar to a nuclear implosion, and it seems many are predicting the fall of Umno not just because of its poor insight into the people's needs, but also due to its horrendous internal problems.

Many had hoped to see positive changes as promised by the party president when he took office, yet by the look of things within the party and in the present administration, talk is cheap. Appointing people unaccountable to the public into his administration is fast seen as an effort to keep him in power. Those that question this are dealt with like they are a national threat. Promises that the price of fuel will not rise this year are just but empty leaks to a sinking Titanic that the government tries to valiantly defend with statistics and reasons.

A promise is a promise no matter what happens next. That is the accepted maxim and Umno is seen as breaking that promise. Add to that an inept minister who goes to meetings saying something and then addressing the press with something else and we are already looking at a nuclear winter of discontent within Umno and the population.

The hanging issue of direct membership into BN is also a matter of grave concern. Many Malaysians would love the chance to join the BN without having to 'kowtow' to any of its components; but this in turn will render the components irrelevant (to quote one late Augustine Paul).

The component leaders are already at war with this suggestion (made by the PM of all people); and the eerie silence at present can only be assumed to mean that this idea has been shot down by not just BN components, but by Umno itself!

If Umno believes that it is strong enough that it does not need any alignment with other parties including PAS, then Umno may lose its relevancy sooner than it thinks. Rather than address its internal problems, Umno tries to poke at the opposition, maybe to veil its own wounds.

Rather than address issues that matter to the population, Umno goes into self implosion mode to secure whatever leftovers are there in the garbage bin. For a 64-year old party, this is surely not what wine would want to turn into. This is classic nuclear technology the Malaysian version.

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