

**No harm in saying 'Sorry lah, Pak Lah'**  
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IN an interview with malaysiakini last year, Dr Mahathir Mohamad revealed that his favourite movie of all time is 'Eight Is Enough'.

I'm not too sure if I had seen the movie Tun M had enjoyed so much. Neither am I sure whether he had seen the one movie most of us had enjoyed so much in the 70's - 'Love Story'.

The 1970 movie 'Love Story' starring Ali MacGraw and Ryan O'Neal remains one of my favourite movies - well, at least, it has been my favourite movie love story.

'Love Story' also produced one of the most memorable lines about apologetic love we have heard from the movies.

That line "Love means never having to say you're sorry" was even voted into the top 100 movie quotes of the American Film Institute's 100 Years Of Movies honours.

Come to think of it, other than "My name is Bond, James Bond", I am unable to think of a more familiar movie line than that one from 'Love Story'.

### **Heart warming gesture**

For Dr Mahathir, the past week has been one of 'apology' and 'saying sorry' and later explaining what he was actually sorry about when he said sorry.

Like many others who followed news reports, I honestly thought Mahathir had apologised to the prime minister after he realised that he was wrong for stating that the mansion in Perth was owned by the latter, when it was not.

In fact, I thought it was such a gentlemanly act from Mahathir to apologise to Pak Lah in public that I had described it as a very 'heart warming' gesture in a column I wrote for a Sarawak paper over the weekend.

This was what I had written last Saturday in the newspaper:

"I believe that many Malaysians will agree with me if I describe Tun Dr Mahathir's apology last Wednesday to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for having alleged that the latter owned a mansion in Australia as something very 'heart warming'.

"Now, this is Mahathir saying "I'm sorry" - that tough nut who dared to take on even the most powerful man in the world (the US President) whenever he thought it was fitting to do so.

"I watched the video of Mahathir apologising several times. You study the man's eyes and facial expression and you can almost tell that this was one sincere apology from him. When he looked down and not wanting to face the camera for a while, it seemed to show a sense of guilt and remorse - this is the Mahathir we hardly get to see.

"As you look back over the past year and recall the number of times Dr M had criticised his successor publicly, and demeaning him in the process, (with Pak Lah hardly wanting to hit back at all) you can better understand why I call this apology a very 'heart warming' episode.

"Let's put it this way - when was the last time we hear Mahathir saying sorry to his adversaries. Honestly, I cannot remember any at all!

"However, our elder statesman did last Wednesday and praise the Heavenly One, we did see the most 'heart warming' gesture from the man we least expect from".

### **Pak Lah deserves the apology**

Today, I was proven wrong. Reading the clarification from Dr Mahathir's office this morning that "Tun Mahathir only apologised for factual errors in his speech" was quite demoralising, to say the least. It was such a let-down.

Honestly, I think the apology to Pak Lah was in order. In Johore, as Mahathir had admitted ("...you are carried away giving a speech like that ... and if you don't censor yourself ... and you are not too careful about what you say ... so I said it") he had erroneously made a statement containing allegations which were serious.

The point here is that the main target of the allegation was Pak Lah. So any apology made should be given to the subject of the attack which was found to be incorrect. Pak Lah was clearly the person wronged here and he deserved an apology.

Let me use this analogy.

A accused B of being a thief. A made the accusation after hearing rumours that B was a thief. When it was later proven that B was not a thief, A apologised for making the mistake.

Now, A should apologise to B for making the accusation as he was the target of that accusation. A has to say sorry to someone - the person he had wronged. If the apology was not meant for B, then who was it meant for?

Similarly, Mahathir said "I'm sorry that I said something that was wrong..." but to whom was the apology meant for, if not Pak Lah.

Of course, our veteran politician can use his wit and sharp tongue to twist and turn on what he actually meant with his "I'm sorry".

But ultimately, Tun Dr Mahathir would have won a lot of endearment and respect from many had he humbly come out and just say "Sorry lah, Pak Lah".

Indeed, that would have been most heart warming.

And yes, saying it 'Once is Enough' and remember, "Being great also means having to say you're sorry".

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