

**Q&A : Khairy to blame for BN's electoral defeat**  
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**Are you surprised by the results?**

mahathir pc 090308 talkMahathir: I think it's shocking. Although I expected BN to lose but I did not think that they lost five states.

I'm sorry that I made the wrong choice in Pak Lah. I never expected a PM to reverse all the policies of the government. So I think the people on the whole must have been very angry. All the three communities, the Chinese, the Malays and the Indians, have reacted.

**Will Tun pressure Pak Lah to resign?**

I think he should accept responsibility for this. Just as in 2004, the huge majority, the huge victory was purportedly due to him 100 percent. Now he should accept 100 percent of the responsibility.

**What do you mean by taking responsibility?**

He has destroyed Umno, destroyed BN. And he has to be responsible for this terrible defeat.

**If he doesn't want to take responsibility, do you think that Umno will do something to make him go?**

I think Umno people on the ground are fearful of this man as they have never been before. During my time they would challenge me. Here I was not allowed to speak. I was given invitations to give talk to Umno members but these were withdrawn. They say that the police told them to withdraw it.

**When you say 'step down', do you mean (from) Umno or PM?**

I think he should (step down). The Japanese would have performed 'hara-kiri'. I think that Najib (Razak) has done very well. He has scored an amazing victory, more than the 2004 elections.

**What do you think led to this defeat?**

khairy jamaluddin interview 011107 poisedI think his son-in-law (Khairy Jamaluddin) played a big role. This young man who has no achievements before but apparently the PM listens to him more rather than the police, the special branch and the armed forces, who are closer

to the ground. They were so taken up with their own newspaper reports that they couldn't hear anything else. They dismissed everything they didn't like.

**Do you think the timing of the election was a miscalculation?**

It can be called a miscalculation but I doubt if they had waited another year, the results would have been any different.

**What were the issues which led to the loss of the states?**

Many issues led to the pent-up feelings of the citizens of which despite the economic growth, the people aren't feeling anything. They feel the rise in the cost of living a big factor. They also see that this government is run by one family. When family takes precedence over cabinet, over government, then people will be against it.

**Do you think this damage is permanent for BN?**

Everything can be reversed if you do things properly. They have been so arrogant that they have suppressed any opinions they don't like and believe in their own reports which are not consistent with what is really happening in the country.

**With the opposition making so much inroads in Malaysia, what do you think will happen?**

Well, there will be instability for some time. If the opposition is good, they should be able to remedy the situation.

**Do you think that Anwar Ibrahim is still relevant?**

I think he is relevant but he is not going to become the prime minister of this country.

**If you were in Pak Lah's shoes, would you be in a hurry to form the government?**

I would take responsibility. If the people want me to resign, I would resign.

**After this setback, do you think that Barisan has any hope to remedy this situation?**

There is hope. But whether the leaders have the will to repair BN is another question.

**Who should succeed Pak Lah?**

Najib won by 26,000 votes and this is much more than in 2004 when the BN was very, very popular. On the other hand, Pak Lah - who had a majority of 18,000 before - only has a majority of 11,000 now. The fact is that he lost a number of votes. And there are not many

people who have improved (their majority) since 2004.

Yes, his son-in-law won but he only won by a small majority, smaller than previously. He was also in a safe seat.

### **How to cure Umno?**

The person responsible should retreat.

### **If the Malays had not voted for opposition this would not have happened. Why did the Umno supporters vote for opposition this time?**

They feel their situation is under pressure. Inflation is high. Their lives are on the line. The people know that you can say that there is 6 percent growth but where is the 6 percent on their body? They are having to spend more money.

I've said this to Malaysiakini. When you say 6 percent, it is an average. This can be achieved by one person having a very high percentage but the rest have nothing. You can't have this sort of figures and expect people to vote for you.

The intelligent people would know that this is not correct. Those that don't understand all these figures, rather be guided by what is actually happening to them. What is happening to them is the higher cost of living and a lowering of their standard of living.

### **Going back to the 1969 elections, after the Alliance had lost, you were one of the main agitators for the prime minister (Tunku Abdul Rahman) to transfer his powers to his deputy (Tun Abdul Razak)...**

I am in a dilemma as I'm an Umno member.

### **Are you the agitator again?**

I will voice out my opinion. If people ask, I will give my opinion. And my opinion in this matter is that the person responsible should step down.

### **Looking at the current BN line-up, do you think that the BN government can manage the economy?**

No, I don't think they can manage. Even when they have full force and tons of money at their disposal they have not done anything.

### **Why?**

You have to ask the state leaders.

### **Penang has fallen to DAP, how do you think this will affect the Malays?**

It's not just about Penang. If we want to correct that, we have got Malay leaders, we've got a Malay government and the citizens who are Malay must know how to overcome their problems.

**What can veterans like Tengku Razaleigh (Hamzah) do to help Umno at this juncture?**

They can give ideas.

**Is it to revolt and cause Pak Lah to resign?**

I am not talking about a rebellion but there must be pressure. And if that pressure is ignored by Pak Lah, then this would turn the matter into a heated confrontation.

**Do you think that the opposition success is attributed to Anwar?**

I don't think it is so. This is more of something against BN than strong support for the opposition.

They (voters) have no choice. If you don't vote BN, who do you vote for? There are only two candidates. So you vote for the opposition or you don't vote at all. Either way, the BN was going to lose a lot of support.

**People say that Umno is still afraid of Pak Lah. So how can they pressure Pak Lah to step down?**

I'm sure that there are some brave members out there.

**Are there any alternatives for Pak Lah other than to resign?**

I don't see any other alternative. The man that is 100 percent responsible has to show that he is responsible.

**Some people were saying if BN's two-thirds majority is denied, a repeat of May 13 would take place. Why won't it happen now?**

No I don't think it would happen. In the first place, the police have been very careful, telling people no demonstration and no parades.

In 1969, the police gave permission for the opposition to hold a victory parade. And they went to Kampung Baru and started insulting the people there, which caused a reaction. This ended up as a riot. If the police remain strong on these demonstrations and victory parades, I don't think there will be any problems.

**Is it time to end racial politics?**

I'm going to tell you this (rejection of BN) involves all the races. It's not as if the Chinese reject BN or all the Indians reject BN. Here, you see Chinese, Indian and Malay reject BN except for Sabah and Sarawak.

**Umno has retained more seats compared to the other component parties like MIC and MCA. Will they pressure Pak Lah to step down?**

That depends on them to whether to apply pressure or not but the Barisan Nasional concept is still relevant. If there is no (MIC chief S) Samy Vellu, then find another Vellu.

**Can you comment on Zam (Zainuddin Maidin)?**

He won or lost? Oh, he lost. Well, the way he was campaigning was really funny, telling people to look at his face and how it doesn't change. But I think that a face that doesn't change can be very boring. Sometimes you must laugh, sometimes you must cry.

He was telling everybody "Ini muka tak bertukar, tak bertukar". Who is interested in his 'wajar'? If he was Britney Spears, then....

**If you had suffered the same defeat, would you have resigned too?**

Yes, I would resign if that is the wish of the people. I've always abided by the wish of the people, so much so that people who were against me were brought back into the cabinet, and that includes Pak Lah, Syed Hamid (Syed Albar), Rais Yatim and (Abdul) Kadir Sheikh Fadzil. All these (leaders) were against me.

But when Pak Lah was elected vice-president, I cannot (not appoint him) as he was wanted by Umno. As such I appointed him back into the cabinet.

**But you did not resign in 1999?**

I did not because we won two-thirds. We won with full Chinese support. Yes, we lost Terengganu and Kelantan but we have always lost Kelantan and Terengganu was for very specific reasons.

**Did BN lose because too many people like Samy Vellu had hung on to power too long?**

I think that Samy Vellu played a big part in the defeat. When he was in BN, he doesn't allow any of the MIC people to come up to his level. If they come up (to be) deputy or vice-president, he will knock them down and even expel them from the party.

mahathir pc 090308 group And he wouldn't allow any other Indian party to join BN. (MG) Pandithan tried to join, begged me to allow him and I wanted to agree but we have this consensus in BN that if one party doesn't agree we cannot accept them.

**Are you surprised by (ISA detainee) M Manoharan's victory?**

This has happened before in 1959 or is it 1964, when PAS used to go from village to village carrying the candidate's shoes and he won.

**What can you say about the media's - especially the mainstream ones' - role in this campaign? Do you think that there should be changes there?**

There should be changes. They should report what actually happens and make a proper analysis. Before, they were able to feed back to me what was happening on the ground. Maybe, when they talk about races and things like that, I would have to clamp down on them, which I did in 1987.

**Should all the bosses of the newspapers resign too?**

They have their constraints. Some of them are my friends and supporters too and they apologise say that they can't help. "It's all this Kali. This Kali," they tell me.

**Has Umno become irrelevant?**

For the moment, yes. It's not always so. If Umno serves the country well, and looks after all the different races, then Umno will be relevant again.

**What is your comment on the young BN candidates losing?**

There is this rumour that some of these candidates are Khairy's and that he wants to be prime minister.

**Do you think that other BN component leaders should resign too?**

I think that one component leader has already been knocked out. As for Ong Ka Ting, it's up to him. This is a very bad defeat for him and MCA and it's never been this bad before.

**Everyone says that PAS and DAP cannot work together but if they don't in Selangor and Perak, they can't form state government. What is your take on this?**

If they work together they can form state government. If not, then representatives of Umno - if there are many - can form a minority government. But it will be a shaky government.

**Are you sad with the results?**

Yes, I am although I had hoped that a message would be sent to the government.

**Will you return to active politics?**

I won't return to active politics but if they want advice, I can give them. How can I return when once I stepped down they treated me like a pariah?

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