

Pak Lah and Hang Tuahs must quit
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 13, 2008
M Bakri Musa

It is utterly reprehensible that Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi refuses to take responsibility for the debacle suffered by his party at the recent elections. Even more despicable were his enablers in Umno, its senior leaders. MCPX

abdullah ahmad badawi polling day vote 080308 05They all dutifully lined up peasant-like at Sri Perdana to pledge their personal loyalty to Abdullah the day following the electoral debacle. These latter day "Hang Tuahs" – individuals loyal to leaders but not to principles or the organisation – included Najib Razak, Hishammuddin Hussein, and Rafidah Aziz.

I am certain they all obediently bowed down low and kissed the man's hand solemnly. Pathetic! When they should have been apprising their leader of the grim political reality, they instead stooped low to humor and flatter him. Those are the duties of court jesters, not of ministers and leaders.

If these next leaders in Umno cannot tell Abdullah the bad news to his face, how can we expect them to represent us in dealing with even more assertive foreign leaders? If these are the faces of the future leaders of Umno, how could we entrust them with the fate of our community? Are these "lembik" (limp) characters the future "brave" defenders of Ketuanan Melayu?

This whole crowd – and them some – must go. Umno must get rid of not only Abdullah but also his entire retinue of enablers and latter-day Hang Tuahs. There is no alternative. The only choice is whether Umno members do the dirty job themselves and on their own timetable, or watch voters do it for the party. The recent election is merely a preview; the next time it would be even uglier.

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad is wrong in saying that Abdullah destroyed Umno. It was not only Abdullah who did it; he had his supporting cast of enablers to help him.

It is not all doom and gloom, however. The party had faced many challenges in the past and had successfully overcome them. All it took was the courage of a few or even of single individuals, as Mahathir did to the Tunku, the Father of Merdeka. Where are the young Mahathirs in today's Umno?

Where are the young?

As for Mahathir, he admits to his grave mistake in selecting Abdullah. Give Mahathir due credit, at least he recognises his error and is trying his best to rectify it. He has demanded that Abdullah take full responsibility for this electoral debacle. Meaning, Abdullah should quit. Mahathir however, can only do so much. Besides, he has little or no stake in the future of Umno except in so far as affecting his legacy.

Another party veteran, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, has also called for Abdullah to take full responsibility. It is a crying shame that with today's Umno, only the old are leading the charge for change. This should normally be within the province of the youth. This reflects

how far Umno has degenerated as an organisation.

It is not enough however for Tengku Razaleigh to give press statements to indicate his displeasure with Abdullah. Ku Li must lead the change and challenge Abdullah, as he (Ku Li) did earlier. Even if Tengku Razaleigh were to fail, he would still have paved the way for others to pursue the matter.

Other senior Umno members like Musa Hitam, Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen and Sharir Samad must also step up to the plate and fulfill their responsibilities. They must help ease out Abdullah gracefully if for no other reason that the alternative would be too ugly to contemplate. I have no wish to see Abdullah publicly humiliated; enough that he would get out of the way. Let the man enjoy his pension.

If those senior members abrogate their responsibilities, then it would be up to Umno's supreme council members – the party's governing body – to take the initiative. At its next meeting they should pass a vote of no confidence on Abdullah. Even if that motion were to fail, the message would once again have been delivered. Abdullah is a slow learner; it takes a while for a message to sink in.

Such a motion, even if unsuccessful, would also pave the way for other brave members to introduce similar resolutions at the upcoming party's general assembly. In short, Umno members at all levels must continue to put the heat on Abdullah and his coterie of enablers until he and they all quit in shame.

Najib should quit too

This coterie would include Najib and all the current vice-presidents and leaders of its Youth, Wanita, Putera and Puteri wings. They are not leaders but enablers.

umno 2007 opening day 081107 najib and pak lahI do not share Mahathir's high opinion of Najib. He has Hang Tuah's blind loyalty but without the bravery or charisma. His tenure as defence minister is best summarised by the currently unfolding Altantuya murder trial; a tale of intrigues, assassinations and megabucks commissions.

Mahathir's confidence in Najib has less to do with Najib's talent but more in Mahathir expressing his *terhutang budi* (gratitude) to Najib's father, Tun Razak, for having "rescued" Mahathir after he was expelled from the party. Najib without the famous "bin" after his name would be just another nondescript civil servant, perhaps a district officer back in his hometown.

Tun Razak's other sons all had considerably more talent than Najib. If Mahathir felt an obligation to the late Tun, he (Mahathir) should have groomed any one of Tun's other sons.

We Malays, and that includes Umno, have no shortage of talent. We just have to be more inclusive and exhaustive in our search. We have to cast our net deep and wide, and not be content with netting the fish that float by us. Usually those are the rotting or nearly rotting ones. The vigorous specimens are out there swimming and enjoying the deep blue water. We have to make an effort to get them.