

Transit Malay nationalists wait and see
Malaysiakini.com
May 29, 2008
A Ghani Ismail

Time in Umno, having entered a state of transit since former party president and premier, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, bailed out on Wesak Day (May 19), is taking the party on a drift that feels like it is dragging endlessly.

MCPX

Mahathir walked out on a spur after the cabinet decided to have him and party secretary-general Tengku Adnan investigated for crimes they may be charged with following the Lingam tape the Royal Commission found believable and hence, incriminating.

mahathir quits umno pc 190508 01In making his final appeal to deputy party president, Najib Tun Razak, to contest for number one, Mahathir is applying for the only certain course to defeat Pak Lah, but tearing to pieces Tengku Razaleigh's hope to get the qualifying number of nominations (58) to enable him to contest for president.

Ku Li is now regarded only as a reserve, a consequence of the former strongman's move that must have appeared in his mind as unavoidable.

The Kelantan prince's gutsy doggedness, however, is critically keeping the effort for leadership change alive in Umno, Najib being as slow as a snail to warm up to the popular assumption in Umno that he will surely win if he [finally] decides to contest against Pak Lah.

Najib's uneventful calculative nature is forcing everyone to have to wait until nominations begin in July when the party holds the divisional meetings and begins the process of nomination. Each nomination carries with it 10 "bonus votes".

Problems aplenty for Pak Lah

While theoretically it is possible for Najib to knock out Pak Lah by the count of the "bonus votes" alone the way Anwar had wrested the number two position from Ghafar Baba in 1993, Najib's slowness in this winner-take-all is observably causing the worst state of nervousness in the party's living memory.

Mahathir's decision to depend solely on Najib taking the plunge has become to many somewhat illusionary and thus stretching time in Umno simply because of the wait to see to believe that Najib will accept the nominations to contest.

Pak Lah, driven deeper and deeper into a horrid mess he caused himself is still unable to resolve Sabah's poor representation in his new cabinet, that's making Anwar Ibrahim's claim to early regime change more and more credible.

The premier is now saddled with yet another eye-popper. Billions in oil royalty that ought to have been paid to Trengganu as "Wang Ehsan" are missing, apparently vanished from the books either by an act of great magic or by high-tech thievery.

A police report has been made, an amount of RM3 billion mentioned when the missing money could be as much as RM6 billion.

Prices, meanwhile, having climbed more than four percent in April, are still going up like the controls are not anywhere beyond the talking.

With subsidies now surpassing RM50 billion and have exceeded the development expenditure, Pak Lah must either find the means to effectively address the need for inflation moderation and manage the currency and food crises or Malaysia, it is generally felt, will soon be drifting on the current of investors', consumers' and workers' nervousness that will soon qualify the nation as a failed state.

The premier is seen as trying to make much of the investments entering Malaysia Iskandar (Development Region) in Johor. But how relevant are these to the challenges the crises are posing?

Floor staffers of joints like MacDonald, Pizza Hut, Mr Tappanyika, Sushi and Kenny Rogers are merely paid an average of RM800 per month, in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, and if lucky, they get an extra RM100 every three months as "incentive".

Are we to seriously believe these workers can survive on that sum in Kuala Lumpur now? How will they be faring 12 months hence, while these outlets have to be striving against lower volumes because of the price hikes?

The problems we currently face are complex and they will stay for years to come.

The price of oil having reached US\$135 per barrel and should surpass US\$200 even without Iran being invaded is only one thing.

Singing the same mantra

It is the rising commodity prices and the manipulation of the food supply and distribution that are making the economic woes run into trends worse than those of the Great Depression of the thirties.

It is really useless to be repeating Malaysia is not affected by the sub-prime and the unsecured loans messes that are turning the world's finances and economy into a wicked and painful game of profiteering. We know the big players are trying to recoup great losses by the manipulation of the commodity, food and currency trades.

But the point is about what we can do and what we will immediately do to avoid and to moderate the impacts of the deliberate disorderliness, and not over and over again repeat the useless mantra that our banks are not hit by the sub-prime scuttle and thus expect people to somehow feel good.

It is alright if the government is not going to be a party to the rising demands to find a peaceful world solution, like going for a new Bretton-Woods. But it is not alright to be singing the same mantra repeatedly since that is like saying clearly you have hit a mental block and should, indeed, quit as a government.

umno 2007 opening day 081107 najib and pak lah We need to know how you plan to drive for self-sufficiency in the sectors that will be badly bashed, and underlining food which we are importing more than RM15 billion per year currently.

That sum can triple within the space of two years in the given circumstances, meaning

Malaysia can become a bankrupt individual if the trends continue unabated.

The purchasing power of the ringgit is being squeezed in many more ways than the inflation. Consumption is already straining and will shortly worsen the negative effects on production, the upshot of which will translate into recession with inflation and yet continue showing positive growth, a poser nobody has yet dared to name beyond the 1985-87 coinage we know as "stagflation", which is old hat.

It's almost a surreal world event, except that the forced-sales of shares and bonds plus the properties the banks are auctioning are indeed real.

In other words, unless we quickly do something intelligent we are surely headed for a crunch.

We would be better off attending to national self-sufficiency and regional and inter-bloc economic co-operations by barter than to be securing marks in showing how good we are in complying with the WTO and the cosmo-global companies so we can get serially patted on the back from the big shots, before international TV.

Seeing we have no answers forthcoming from Pak Lah and his cabinet that can provide us with a reason to hope we'd be getting any better, rather than for Mahathir and Razaleigh to be wasting their accumulated experiences in this critical transit of time, surely we can gain much if they were to leave the distasteful aside and help guide the nation to secure the society from the decided drift that's taking us towards breakdown.

People have come to assume as given that Pak Lah has bogged himself down and is in no shape either to rehabilitate Umno or to plan and manage the country's needed economic adjustments.

Everywhere people are saying the political puzzlement in Umno and BN is simply arising from the fact he does not want to let go and would rather see the ship sink with him.

Umno, as a mass organisation that has become power and money absorbed, cannot be expected to regain the spiritual quest of the early years that would be needed to move the members to act as Mahathir is asking them to do, which is to bail out and shout from the outside to demand Pak Lah quit before they will return to the party.

ku li tengku razaleigh interview 241106 smileHe may have done the right thing for himself, and with him his wife and a son, Mokhzani.

As for party members, some say they would be losing the means they have to aggress against Pak Lah should Najib choose to contest and/or if it has to be Ku Li they must back the chance for change.

Najib has said he fears the party will be divided should he contest for number one. Party members now say that will not happen unless Pak Lah lets the power go to the opposition and the horror of a president of that sort crashes the meaning and worth of Umno like a mirror being smashed on the floor.

Sense of futility

Najib has successfully gained for himself the biggest single disappointment many can trace in the history for Umno. He is seen not at all as a fighter, they say, and not as someone

who places the nation and party above self.

He has lost for nothing a lot of goodwill and respect while the party is heavily inclined towards him no matter the Altantuya murder trial casting a wild shadow over him and his wife, Rosmah.

The popular belief is, unless a regime change actually happens, Umno will not fragment beyond what has already occurred.

Any significant bleeding can only be expected to happen if Pak Lah were to stay as president beyond December, which would seem to be reflecting the sense of futility among the immortally impotent majority in Umno's 3.5 million members.

The nationalist Malays have apparently successfully castrated themselves.

Meanwhile, until the nominations for president and deputy president are made beginning July, time in Umno will still be skirting reality and shunting in transit, bearing little hope to reduce the gigantic frustration and sense of self-defeat that has become almost second nature to the Malays in Umno.

The zeitgeist has long been saddled on the fear of the "orang asing" (the aliens) and acknowledged little about internal rot and incompetence as causes of terminal political and economic failures.

The present crop of Malay nationalists in Umno, caught in a bind such as now and fearing for Malay survival, can become very vocal in the evenings at coffee-shops but leaves to Mahathir the ravings and rantings in the attempt "to remove the gangrene".

In 2004, most of the Umno delegates that chose the current list of Umno supreme council members, had accepted bribes we were told. It was the first Umno supreme council election held under Pak Lah's leadership. The delegates were corrupt!

Now we learn anywhere between RM3 billion and RM6 billion of Trengganu's oil royalty had not been paid to the state government. Where on earth did the money go?

No wonder time in Umno is in transit and waiting for something to happen, and which will, of course, probably from July. Hidup Melayu! Long Live the Malays!

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news//83614>