

Umno must change way it chooses leader
Malaysiakini.com
Oct 7, 2008
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On Monday (Oct 6), Utusan Malaysia chided Nur Jazlan Mohamad, the Umno chief for Pulau, Johor, for offering himself to be a candidate for the post of Umno deputy president in the elections in March.

The paper's attitude is the typical reflection of the vestiges of feudalism within Umno and the Malay society at large which in many ways, are impeding their progress for political maturity which demands that one should succeed on merit.

The way I see it, by criticising Nur Jazlan, Utusan seems to be more repressive than many Umno leaders who, at this trying times, want to see drastic changes in Umno before it suffers from internal implosion and die like many other political parties in many countries.

In Israel it is thought that the Labour and the Likud parties which were offering two opposing political and economic policies - like the Republicans and the Democrats in the US - would last forever yet they are now eclipsed by the new Kadima Party.

Utusan is, like Umno Wanita chief Rafidah Aziz, saying that if you are nobody, you have no right to go for higher posts. In fact, Nur Jazlan was being polite because he is only going for the No 2 spot.

Nur Jazlan and others should go for the president's post, no matter whether Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is contesting it or not.

The problem with Umno is that its president has always been someone indicated or nominated by the outgoing president. It probably worked with Tunku nominating Razak but the question is was Hussein Onn (nominated by Razak) a good prime minister?

Many people also think Dr Mahathir Mohamad (nominated by Hussein Onn after being forced to so) was a disaster and now many think that Abdullah (nominated by Mahathir) was a greater disaster.

I have said all along that after 51 years, Malaysia could have progressed much more with several prime ministers. Musa Hitam, Tengku Razaleigh, Harun Idris, Ghafar Baba and other Umno greats should have had their chances of being PM. How worse could it be?

It is fine if the succession is based purely based on seniority but the irony is it isn't like that all the time. Many leaders were catapulted to higher posts without going through the mill. They rose to the top by virtue of being the reigning PM's favourite person, or simply being the sons of former leaders.

For instance, the PM's son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin says he is going for Umno Youth's top post on his own merit, not as the son-in-law, but he seems to forget that he got to his present post in Umno Youth uncontested because others had to scramble and make way for him.

Clearly, the leadership of China's Communist Party and the old Russian Communist Party, are truly those from the grassroots. They all had to start from bottom, but not in Umno.

Umno must change the way it chooses its leader and it must do it now. Abolish the quota system and open the doors to every Umno leader, big and small, and they must state their policies. Voting should be based on the preferential system (PR) after which the top two would go for the final voting.

This new system would do away with the deputy and vice-presidents. Only the Supreme Council will be retained which will act as watchdog of the leaders or one of whom will be elected leader if the leader dies in office. The leader should only serve for two terms.

Abolish the Wanita, the Youth, the Putera and the Puteri wings. Perhaps, Umno Youth could be allowed on university campuses.

Other than the Umno elections, the general elections too should be based on proportional representation, after which a Barisan Nasional government could be formed.

The present BN which is a form of a 'marriage of convenience' no longer works. The old understanding that Umno is first above others or first among equal partners is no longer acceptable to the MCA, MIC and others.

Thus, Umno should return to the drawing board as they say for in politics there are no friends or foes.

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