

**Pak Lah shouldn't have given in to Dr Mahathir**  
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Let me tell you the reason why I will respect Pak Lah as the fifth prime minister of Malaysia. There is no secret about it. If he was still going to be the PM after March, people might think that I have ulterior motives.

He is an outgoing PM, and I have got no personal benefits from that one bear hug I gave him 20 years ago, which shocked the teachers and everyone on the floor. It must have made an impact on him, but the fact that he still remembers that incident, tells me that he is a people-friendly person.

Although there was a lot of coffee shop talk that was not in favour of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, it took so long for this one patient Pak Lah to lash out against his predecessor, who in the past three years has been harping incessantly against his leadership.

Many of us agree that if Mahathir had retired gracefully, he would have become a well-respected statesman. Instead, many of us scratch our heads in recent years asking why this 82-year-old man is still spewing out so much venom.

It was only in the last three years that I suddenly realised how this man is so full of hatred, that he would do anything and everything just to get his own way. His opponents had once thought he was a pharaoh; I say he is thinking he is more than that.

He puts Pak Lah on a pedestal; then he tries to unseat him. He puts Najib Abdul Razak onto a pedestal and next he would see if Najib would follow his advice.

Ultimately, one wonders what all this will lead to. The 'cynic bridge' (whether scenic or crooked is up to one's viewpoint) may now be built immediately. Billions of EPF and Petronas money would again go into this project. What else?

Maybe another big spate of arrests under ISA and more newspapers to be closed down. I dare not think further. It is absolutely unhealthy for Malaysian politics to revolve around a certain individual as this would badly affect investor confidence.

What Malaysia's economy needs most is more Pak Lahs, who would mend relationships and keep up with the rest of the world in giving freedom of expression. It would make us a laughing stock if we continue to negotiate for Au Yang Su Kyi's release when our own political opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim is hounded by the police and the courts.

In the past, I would only sit on the fence whenever my friends criticised Dr M; now I join them in full agreement. With him are the warlords within Umno that continue to alienate Umno from the majority of Malaysians who want peace and harmony among the races.

Like many other Malaysians who swung their votes towards the opposition, on March 8, I have taken sides because of what Mahathir did over the past three years. It has nothing to do with Pak Lah or what he did or didn't do. After all, he merely inherited a BN government that badly needs reforms.

Politicians have to realise that Malaysians can do well in race relations without those who

seek personal gain by playing up racial politics.

Mahathir himself is a descendant from a gentleman from Kerala, India. If anyone fully understands the implications of this fact, there would be no Ahmad Ismail saga. Mahathir should fully acknowledge his own background otherwise, he will be remembered in years to come by the proverbial saying, 'bagaikan kacang lupakan kulit' (one who has forgotten his roots).

Pak Lah's mandate in 2003 as the prime minister was the people's mandate, which far outshone that of Mahathir's. Comparing the results in 2008 and 1999, Pak Lah still scores higher than his predecessor.

This shows that the people had long lost their confidence in Mahathir's style of ruling the country.

Mahathir should realise that he is not and start to live peaceably with all men.

Pak Lah, if only you knew that your decision to step down was a bad one, you would not have done it to give in to one man and his warlords' demand.

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