

UMNO's Unapologetic Apology
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As reported by Bernama on Saturday, the Prime Minister Najib Razak made the momentous apology to all Malaysians "on behalf of the Barisan Nasional (BN) for the coalition's mistakes in the last general election, which cost it several electoral seats and states, including Kedah."

Today, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin tried to make light of the apology by boasting of Barisan Nasional's (BN) achievement in the past few decades. He said "...during the 54-year period, no one can deny the fact, despite the weaknesses, we have made huge progress in the fields of socio-economy, culture, education, international relations and various others."

Muhyiddin had further wanted to avoid the subject by adding that "there is no need to list out our weaknesses; that is in the past."

UMNO Information Chief Ahmad Maslan was even more dismissive of the Prime Minister's apology. He had urged Malaysians "to provide BN the mandate to rule following the promise by Najib Abdul Razak that the coalition will fix its past mistakes".

Their statements today have single-handedly destroyed any goodwill which may have arisen out of Najib's apology made to Malaysian's the previous day. It demonstrates that BN remains as arrogant and as dismissive of Malaysian criticisms as ever and any chance of change will not happen if BN were to remain in power.

Muhyiddin made light of the need to list BN's weakness because it was in the past and not present. Ahmad Maslan on the other hand claimed that without return BN's two-third majority in Parliament, the coalition is unable to fix its past mistakes.

The above only demonstrates the utter disarray and panic in the UMNO top leadership in facing the upcoming General Elections as all parties are contradicting each other over the same message to win votes. While not wanting to contradict the Prime Minister directly over the apology which was made, UMNO leaders appear to be scrambling to contain its impact by making irrelevant the apology.

All UMNO leaders including the Prime Minister had missed the point that the apology is completely useless and lacks any semblance of credibility if it is not matched with deeds. In fact it is rather late for Najib to be apologizing for the "past mistakes" prior to 2008, when he should be apologizing for not being able to correct these mistakes despite having been the Prime Minister for the past 3 years!

Malaysians vented their frustration at the BN government in 2008 over rampant corruption, cronyism and abuse of power. Malaysians became more divided than ever due to BN's divide-and-rule policies which plays off one race against the other.

However, after ascending the premiership for 3 years, Malaysians are not witnessing any improvements but only worsening conditions in the country. Malaysia has dropped further in the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from 56th to 60th. The BN government still lacks the political will to tackle grand corruption and cases of abuse of power as can be seen in recent scandals such as the RM250 million National Feedlot Corporation project.

On top of that, Najib is perpetuating patronage and cronyism in its administration by awarding mega-projects and concessions without any competitive tenders to well-known associates of the BN Government – such as the 60-year RM7.1 billion West Coast Expressway project. The Government has also in the past year awarded many mega-contracts to entities related to Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary - the RM7.55 billion contract to DRB Hicom to supply 257 armoured personnel carriers, the new 1,000

Megawatt coal-powered plant concession to Malakoff Bhd and the appointment of MMC-Gamuda as the Project Development Partner of the RM53 billion Klang Valley MRT project.

Worse, instead of improving inter-faith and inter-racial relations over the past 3 years, the conditions have worsened with the Government's obstinate insistence on banning the use of the term "Allah" by Christians while both the Prime Minister and the First Lady of Malaysia continued to lend support and give legitimacy to the right-wing Perkasa to fan racist sentiments and encourage violent behaviour.

There is much for the BN to apologise for to all Malaysians, not just prior to 2008, but particularly for the past 3 wasted years. UMNO's most unapologetic "apology" just before the upcoming elections will hence not change how the rakyat perceives BN, especially since the BN leaders are not even willing to recognize the faults in the system.

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