

Is The Tun Hallucinating?
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By P Ramakrishnan

My dear Tun Dr Mahathir,

I'm at a loss as to whether you are hallucinating or failing to see the reality.

Your views on Penang and Selangor are misconceived and misplaced. You come across as a dishonest politician determined to score political points and mislead Malaysian voters. You do no credit to yourself nor do you live up to your reputation as an elder statesman (Bernama, 29 January 2012).

Your statement, "They have already been given a lot of chances. A lot of unhappy things have happened in Penang, the same (is happening) in Selangor," does not make any sense at all. "They have been given a lot of chances", you unreasonably claim.

Pakatan only came to power on March 8, 2008. They have been in office only for four short years. What chances were given to them and who gave them those chances? What are you talking about? What miracles were you expecting them to perform in this short period of time?

Compare their short term of office to the Barisan Nasional's nearly 55 years of tenure – truthfully and honestly. We can justifiably throw back at the BN the very words you had uttered: "They (BN) have already been given a lot of chances. A lot of unhappy things have happened in Penang, the same (is happening) in Selangor." This is indeed a valid observation requiring an honest answer from you, dear Tun.

Indeed, 55 years is a very long time. It is more than half a century. The BN have been given all the chances it wanted and needed. But what have the BN achieved during their long tenure in office except undermining our unity and keeping the people apart? Our unity has been destroyed by senseless and thoughtless policies and statements without a care for the welfare of the majority of Malaysians who are peace-loving and poor.

Yes, Tun, if anybody had been given too much chance it is the BN. Indeed, what more can the BN do which they had failed to do during these 55 years? What miracles can the BN now perform to transform this country into a haven for all citizens and provide them with a dignified livelihood?

What do you actually mean by claiming, "They have been given the chance. What's there left to try. If we allow the situation to deteriorate badly, it will be difficult to repair."

Your rambling statement, "If we allow the situation to deteriorate badly, it will be difficult to repair" comes across as ridiculous and garrulous. What has the Pakatan done that has brought about the deterioration? What is that they are doing that would render the problem beyond repair? Please be specific and enumerate the wrongdoings of the Pakatan.

Tun, you should not make sweeping claims that are without merit. Many Malaysians are truly disappointed and disillusioned with you and justifiably feel that you have out-lived your usefulness as a political leader. You had your time and you did things the way you wanted to. That period is over and done with. There is nothing more for you to do.

Both Penang and Selangor have attracted the biggest FDI totalling more than RM15bn, which is unmatched by the BN-controlled states. Doesn't this indicate positively that the Pakatan-controlled states are performing very much better in spite of their short term of tenure and lack of administrative experience and expertise? Honestly, dear Tun, doesn't that deserve some praise?

You kept everything under wraps and resorted to the Official Secrets Act (OSA) to deny citizens their right to be informed. A lot of scandals and corruption prevailed because they are kept from the purview of public scrutiny and guarded as state secrets.

The Pakatan-controlled states in Selangor and Penang, on the other hand, have promulgated a Freedom of Information Act in order to be transparent and accountable. Tun, isn't this something that has to be complimented?

Cronies and corruption

Under your tenure for 22 years, many crony politicians became wealthy beyond imagination and without being accountable for their wealth. Elected representatives and cabinet ministers declared their assets only to you and, according to certain well-informed circles, you had used this information to secure their unquestioning loyalty. That was how you had your way – it was your way and no other way!

We are reminded of the episode concerning the removal of Osman Aroff, the then Menteri Besar of Kedah, who had enjoyed the support of the majority of assembly members in Kedah. These assembly members went to see you, dear Tun, to plead for the retention of their MB. You, reportedly saw them individually and after that they all returned to Kedah abandoning Osman Aroff. Rumour had it then that you had a file on each of them and that forced them to fall in line behind you.

Dear Tun, Pakatan-controlled states of Selangor and Penang did something that you wouldn't dare dream of doing. All their Exco members declared their assets publically. This is something that civil society of Malaysia has been campaigning for, for a very long time, claiming that this would curb corruption and check abuse of governance.

But you would not be persuaded. You wanted to be the sole privy to the corruption and abuse so that you would have absolute control over politicians holding public positions.

Many Malaysians, in the past, have worked loyally and faithfully and had contributed to the progress of this country. These old timers who retired many years ago are forced to struggle to live a hard life with their meagre pensions in these times of hardships. Their counterparts of modern times, on the other hand, draw reasonable pensions to lead a decent life. The hardships suffered by these senior citizens have not been addressed. Their contributions were not even acknowledged.

But the Pakatan government in Penang has been giving out RM100 once a year for the last three years to express their appreciation to these senior citizens. Admittedly, this isn't very much but the very thought of appreciation really warms the hearts of these people. With the vast resources available to the BN, they are placed in a far better situation to do more to help these unfortunate people. But why, dear Tun, did the BN government not bother doing this? They could have shown a generous face and given more to these people with all the wealth at their disposal. But they did nothing!

Corruption has become so rampant that so much of our wealth is either lost or stolen to the detriment of the nation. Contracts given to crony companies with inflated costs have drained our wealth. Highway toll agreements, the Tajuddin-Malaysia Airlines out-of-court settlement, the rescue of Bank Rakyat and Bank Bumiputra, the reckless forex fiasco in the UK, the bungling Maminco tin-buying spree, to name a few – they have all resulted in the loss of billions of ringgit that could have alleviated the plight of the poor. These are, unfortunately, dear Tun, your legacies that brought terrible hardships for the homeless and the helpless.

Uplifting the people

You wouldn't have open tenders for projects that would have saved billions of ringgit and secured the services of contractors with ability and proven expertise. That would have prevented some contractors from running away without completing their projects and ensured that buildings wouldn't collapse because

of poor workmanship and inferior materials. But repeated episodes of cheating contractors and uncompleted projects did not seem to disturb the conscience of those in charge. It was business as usual and billions of ringgit were regularly squandered without a care in the world.

On the other hand, now we have open tenders in the Pakatan states and Class F contractors are very happy and contented with this arrangement. According to these contractors, under the previous BN government, one had to have connections to get a contract and one had to give inducements to be considered favourably. Otherwise, getting contracts would have been impossible. But now, with open tenders, the deserving have been rewarded with contracts and they have delivered the completed projects on time. Isn't this something that has to be appreciated, dear Tun?

Malaysian workers have been struggling for years for a minimum wage policy. The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) has been championing this issue for decades. But it was opposed vehemently by the Malaysian Employers Federation, which wanted to reap hefty profits from the sweat of the workers. And the Malaysian government did not have the political will to implement the minimum wage policy. Thus we lost our local skilled workers and builders who left the country to work elsewhere. But the exploitation continues to this day with the employment of foreign workers.

Isn't it praiseworthy that the Pakatan government in Selangor has implemented a minimum wage policy for all its employees in GLCs as from January this year? They are paid a minimum salary of RM1,500. Shouldn't the employees enjoy the fruit of their labour, dear Tun?

Farmers in the new villages of Perak who have been tilling the land and growing vegetables and fruit for the country for generations were exploited and kept in a state of uncertainty as to their livelihood as they did not own the land. Every election this became a moot point for the farmers. Whether their TOL would be extended or cancelled was a worrying experience for these farmers. And when the BN wins the election in Perak, the TOL of these farmers would be renewed. The message was very clear. Vote for the BN or your TOL would not be renewed. They were beholden to the BN for the extension of their TOL.

The Pakatan government gave them the land titles and their dignity and freed them from their unnecessary anxiety. The rationale was these farmers have been on the land for generations and have been serving the nation with their produce and they deserved the land titles. Isn't this something wonderful that deserves to be congratulated, dear Tun?

Every voter who dies in Penang and Selangor is given RM1,000 and RM2,500 respectively for funeral expenses. This assistance is greatly appreciated, especially by the poor. For the first time a voter receives something very specific and substantial when he or she dies. This had never happened under BN rule. They bribe the living for their vote and forget them when they are dead. Under the Pakatan rule they take care of the living and the dead! Don't they deserve a pat on their back, dear Tun?

All this caring and giving must make a great impact on the people. If given more time there will be other good policies that will benefit the people and perhaps make it difficult for the BN to make any headway in the future. Is that what is worrying you, dear Tun? Is this what you meant when you sounded the warning to the BN, "If we allow the situation to deteriorate, it will be difficult to repair"?

You have correctly foreseen the inevitable doom for the BN. You have realised that it will be difficult to undo the good deeds of the Pakatan. In comparison, the BN will be cast in poor light and cursed for neglecting the majority of the deserving Malaysians who are poor. You are seeing what is impending and you have the right to fear the inevitable, dear Tun!

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