



DELAYED GRATIFICATION

Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad's money politics saga came to end on Oct 16, with him tendering his resignation as Federal Territories Minister some three months after he was found guilty by the Umno Disciplinary Board. The question on everyone's mind is: Why did it take so long?

Isa: Going... going... gone

By Habhajan Singh

WHEN will this 'select' bunch of politicians stop mocking the *rakyat*? The saga surrounding the long-pending, much-delayed resignation of Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad as Federal Territories Minister serves as a good example.

'If they want me to resign, I will resign... I have no problem resigning from the post,' he told journalists at his residence on Oct 7. Earlier that day, the Umno Supreme Council had brought to an end the three-month in-house trial of the former Menteri Besar of Negeri Sembilan. The party's most powerful chamber had rejected his appeal against the decision of the disciplinary committee, which had found him guilty of money politics.

However, what took the cake was the fact that despite all that had happened, he had the gall to tell the *rakyat* that he had no problem in resigning, even though he chose to linger around. Worse still, he had the audacity to suggest that he was still needed at the ministry. 'I will try to clear as much backlog before I resign,' he was quoted in *The Star*. If this is not making a mockery of the nation's Parliamentary governing system, then what is?

To begin with, he should have vacated the ministry months ago. Well, that's the opinion of a good number of the *rakyat* anyway. With the party in power drumming into them its love for them, we shall discuss what they actually thought about the whole affair.

For a start, they were shocked to see Isa

topping the list of Umno's vice-presidency race. If only the tables and chairs at the Riverside Cafe at the Putra World Trade Centre could talk, I'm sure they would have spewed out many interesting tales.

'I knew I would win,' he told this writer when approached at the cafe last September. He was clearly elated and beaming from his victory announced just hours earlier. When asked for an interview at a later date, he gave his mobile telephone number, which, interestingly, had lots of threes and sevens in it. Well, from the looks of it, he certainly appeared to be one of the 'lucky three' among the seven contenders.

Another surprise, to a lesser extent, was Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Ali Rustam securing the second spot.

Continues on page 23

Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, favourite among the VP pack, came in third.

On that day, Isa brushed aside any suggestions of money politics. His message was simple: The people had spoken, so let us get on with life. The victory, he assured, was not merely a tide swung by money and favours. But the ground was abuzz with allegations of money politics. Delegates to the nation's most powerful political party, in private, spoke of widespread vote buying.

Nine months later, Isa was hauled up before the party's disciplinary board on allegations of misconduct at the election and was found guilty of 'money politics'.

For any honourable politician, that would have been a good time as any to resign. There wouldn't have been a need to look out for bigger cues to avoid the greater team - Umno and the Barisan Nasional - from being dragged deeper into the scandal.

But this does not seem to be the 'in-thing' with our politicians. And Isa, being every inch a politician, decided to adhere to the saying that it ain't over till the fat lady sings and wait it out till his appeal ran its course.

Then, at its Friday sitting on Oct 7, the Umno Supreme Council finished the job for him. Seeing his earlier six-year suspension for political corruption being reduced to three, Isa decided that he had to give up his ministership. However, still no resignation.

A week later, on Oct 15, talk was rife that he would be tendering his resignation letter soon. The next day, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak made a statement to the Press: 'I have been told that Isa will be submitting his resignation letter either today or tomorrow.' Finally, on Oct 17, the waiting game ended as it was announced that Isa had indeed tendered his resignation the day before. Now, this certainly ranks high on the nation's most-dragged-out-resignation list.

In a political arena where honour and dignity mattered, would this have happened?

'Here, you don't talk about honour. They will be honoured to continue,' says a political analyst.

Isa is gone. That is at least the situation for him for the next three years. But suspicion lingers on that he was not alone in buying favour at last year's assembly. **mb**