

'Why blame one person?'

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Q: Abdullah said the party had identified some Umno saboteurs at the general election. What did these members do and what action can the party take against them?

A: As I have said, some candidates were from outside and this made the locals unhappy. We cannot blame them if they had strongly disapproved of the "outsider" candidates.

But if they had sabotaged a candidate who was a local candidate, disciplinary action will be taken, which includes expulsion from the party.

Q: So do you think BN's poor performance is Abdullah's fault?

A: Definitely not. There were so many contributing factors that led to BN's poor performance.

As I said Dr Mahathir wanted a strong opposition and when it happened, he blamed Pak Lah. I must say Dr Mahathir was also to blame for BN's poor performance.

The four BN state governments falling to the opposition was because of the state government leaders' own doing, why blame Pak Lah?

If there is sabotage by BN members, why blame Pak

Lah? Why point the finger only at Pak Lah when it is due to various factors within and without BN?

Q: Dr Mahathir has been vocal, even calling for Abdullah to resign as prime minister and Umno president. Would Umno have dealt with Dr Mahathir differently if he had not been the former prime minister.

A: In 1987, Umno was de-registered. It was declared illegal and it came as a big blow to party members but we did not ask Dr Mahathir to resign.

During his time he detained 106 people under *Ops Lallang*. He dealt with a heavy hand against his rivals, including taking disciplinary action. Was there a call for his resignation?

Pak Lah allows freedom of press and no restrictions have been imposed on papers about publishing Dr Mahathir's criticisms of him. In fact Pak Lah's level of tolerance is high and has increased.

He tolerates and accepts criticisms, even from Dr Mahathir, and many people took the opportunity to hit at him. He accepted it and this is because of the freedom of speech and transparency he allowed.

It's sad that it has come to a stage where people cannot differentiate between the truth and the political state-

ments by many people.

The Internet has become the *surat layang* (poison pen letter) of yesteryears and young Malaysians are carried away with all this.

It was not Umno which lost badly in this general election but also MCA, MIC, PPP and Gerakan.

Indians were strong supporters of BN but this time they went against BN because of the CD which was distributed widely which showed the demolition of the Hindu temple in Shah Alam.

That was why Selangor fell to the opposition. So why should Pak Lah be asked to resign when the component parties performed very badly.

Q: You've had your differences with the alternative media (bloggers) and people are now increasingly turning to them for news. How would you be handling this situation?

A: The anti-BN blogs were very effective. Umno and BN didn't use this type of media because they felt that their track record was good enough. The bloggers really stirred up the emotions and anger of the people with their writing, some of which I must admit were true, some wrong and unrealistic.

The videos which came out during the election made peo-

ple angry. The lyrics, music and narration touched their hearts, souls and minds and everything that the government did turn out wrong for them.

Whatever said and done, I think we have to accept the alternative media whether we like it or not. There are lot of good and bad things as well as lots of rubbish. Since we cannot fight them, join them.

I will soon be setting up my own blog and website. Some politicians have also set up their blogs. I think it's about time all politicians have their own blogs so that people can visit the blogs and give their views and suggestions.

Q: The other parties in the BN coalition are working quietly to resolve their internal problems. But Umno members are airing the dirty linen in public. Why do you think they are doing it?

A: I think somebody has some agenda and they want the prime minister to go down. They are attacking openly. They are not the small timers.

Q: Some political observers said members have spoken up because Pak Lah has 'allowed' this to happen. Do you agree with this?

A: Pak Lah is championing

tolerance, transparency and freedom of the press. I was told that Dr Mahathir, when he became the prime minister, had instructed an editor to stop giving coverage to his predecessor Tun Hussein Onn.

Pak Lah did not give any such instructions. So don't let this freedom be abused by certain quarters.

Q: Observers are saying that Umno is heading for a rift like 1987.

A: People are thinking that Pak Lah is the main cause. But they should analyse the whole situation. Seventy per cent of Indians shifted to the opposition, is it because of Pak Lah? They could be angry with the MIC leader.

Dr Mahathir campaigned against the party and asked that it not be given a large majority, why blame Pak Lah?

The former Selangor menteri besar gave the broom to non-performers, is it because of Pak Lah?

The sabotage by Umno divisions was due to internal problems, not because of Pak Lah. The divisions showed their candidate lists only at the last minute, is it Pak Lah's mistake? Who chose the candidates? If it is the issue of the 4th floor boys, they were definitely not the cause of the four states falling to Pakatan Rakyat. Why blame Pak Lah alone?