

**Welcome to UmnoLand. Population: a few invincible, many applauding  
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NEWS ANALYSIS BY THE MALAYSIAN INSIDER**

Leaving aside the fact that he no longer has two-thirds of the pie in Parliament or even a fraction of the love and respect the likes of Tunku Abdul Rahman or Tun Dr Ismail used to enjoy, it is still great to be an Umno politician these days. Here is why:

Perk 1: He has a ready-made excuse.

It is election year in the party and so the rest of Malaysia must give him elbow-room to say and do things which are wrong and seditious. Please excuse Noh Omar, Shafie Apdal, Ahmad Maslan and Zahid Hamidi for the foolishness that masquerades as information every time their lips move; it is election year.

They have to play the race and religion card to get noticed by Umno delegates and to get voted into positions of power in Umno. It is nothing personal, Malaysians are told, but in any country, a politician who is seeking to be elected must speak the language of his constituents. And in Umno, the more strident and shrill the tone employed, the more popular he is. Nothing personal, Malaysia. That's just the way it is.

Perk 2. He doesn't have to think, just follow.

Some time ago, it may have been a requirement that a politician has the ability to sweat his brains and think about policies and ensure that what he says makes sense, or at least has a modicum of truth. Not anymore.

The Umno politician allows himself to be led by Utusan Malaysia and anyone with a story to sell, no matter how implausible or ridiculous. It is called outsourcing the thinking. He does not even need to think up dirty tactics. Between January and now, Utusan has allegedly published more than 100 articles about the DAP that suits him just fine.

Perk 3. He can be cavalier, flippant or feign amnesia – anytime.

Many people did a double take when Datuk Ali Rustam accused the opposition for being responsible for the surge in violent crime in Malaysia, arguing that it was because of pressure from Pakatan Rakyat that the Najib administration did away with the Emergency Ordinance.

Some 1,000 hardcore criminals were released back into the streets when the preventive detention laws were abolished and the authorities blamed them for the crime wave.

But here is the thing: the opposition did not push for the EO to be scratched from the law books. Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and gang huffed and puffed and blew down the ISA but EO was not on the agenda.

The man responsible for dismantling the EO was Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak. The idea of doing away with some oppressive legislation came early after he took over from Tun Abdullah Badawi in 2009. Then, there was still residual feeling among Umno politicians that to regain the support of urban voters and to hush the chattering classes, the Barisan Nasional needed to exhibit its reformist agenda.

Of course, Najib dithered. But he finally dismantled the ISA and EO and basked in the afterglow of positive write-ups in The Financial Times and international press.

Interestingly, there was not even a squeak of protest from the then Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein or the likes of Zahid Hamidi when the EO was abolished.

Why? Because they were quite happy to embrace all the plaudits coming BN's way for this piece of "enlightened" decision-making – without stopping to think about the consequences of allowing hardcore criminals back onto the streets.

Whichever way you look at it, there is only one group of politicians culpable for this dreadful crime festival in Malaysia. No?

Perk 4. He can expect rewards, even with a losing record.

You have to envy former Johor Mentri Besar Ghani Othman.

Despite nearly two decades of helming the state, he could not even hold the Gelang Patah parliamentary seat against a newbie to Johor, one Mr Lim Kit Siang. Yet he was rewarded with the chairmanship of Sime Darby, arguably one of the most prestigious of corporate appointments.

Then there is Ali Rustam. Sure, he lost in Malacca. But now he is tipped to head Permodalan Nasional Berhad, the national investment agency.

Perk 5. He can always count on the media.

Apparently an Umno politician never speaks out of turn. He is either misquoted, misunderstood or taken out of context.

And the mainstream media is only too happy to accommodate an Umno politician caught in a bind over a statement he made knowingly.

Take Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. On July 30, he accused non-Muslims of being behind the now infamous dog bathing video and cautioned them about insulting Muslims. Four days later, Bernama reports that the deputy prime minister was not referring to the video clip.

There are several disturbing conclusions to make if we accept this Bernama report. One, that the DPM and his coterie of advisers needed that many days to come up with this limp explanation.

Two, if Muhyiddin was not referring to the dog video clip, what motivated him to try and drive a wedge between Muslims and non-Muslims? See, this is even more worrying. It means the number two man in the country just woke up on July 30 and decided to take a cheap shot at a sizeable number of Malaysians. No provocation. Just decided to say it. And on the part of the mainstream media, no questions asked.

Yes, it is a great time to be an Umno politician. - August 5, 2013.

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