

Take a leaf out of Pak Lah's book, Mr PM... specifically, page 18
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Instead of worrying about pushback from Umno warlords, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak should pick up the new book on Abdullah Badawi's years in office and turn to page 18.

There Abdullah sets out clearly his regret at not using more forcefully the mandate he won in 2004 to bring about reforms expected by Malaysians, a decision which led to Barisan Nasional's poor performance in 2008 and his forced departure from Putrajaya.

Like Najib, Abdullah said he had to deal with a Malaysian public which expected reforms and those within his party and the establishment who were resistant to anything new.

"I underestimated the resistance to the changes and reforms that I wanted to implement. Perhaps, on hindsight, I would be more forceful in making those changes and less accommodating of those who resisted these changes. But that's water under the bridge now," he said in the book titled, *Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years In Malaysia*.

The book contains essays by Malaysians and foreigners on Abdullah's one term in office.

There is also one chapter where Abdullah answers questions on everything from criticisms on cronyism to race relations.

The interview was conducted months before the May 5 general election but his nuggets of advice to Najib seem more relevant given the current PM's indecisiveness after the polls.

Faced with pushback from special interest groups within Umno and the civil service, Abdullah chose the path of least resistance and after the initial flurry of policy statements about fighting corruption and improving governance, he reverted to speaking and acting as the president of Umno, instead of as the prime minister of Malaysia.

Abdullah was criticised for not implementing the deep reforms recommended by the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on the Police Force, in particular the setting up of the independent police commission (IPCMC).

In the book, he conceded that he had major problems with the report put forward by the RCI.

"On one occasion, the Inspector-General of Police himself made a statement on Police Day – in my presence – opposing the report. Feelings were running high and to be very frank, if we had tried to push it through, we were going to have problems with the police," he said.

But wasn't it a dangerous thing for the civilian government to be beholden to the police, he was asked by the interviewer.

"Well, of course. But let's accept the reality. You can have ideals but you cannot pursue these ideals by not engaging reality," responded Abdullah.

Speaking about what Najib has been doing since becoming PM, he said, "Najib is trying to

do many good things. But he faces the same problem I did – resistance.

“Unfortunately, there are still people in Umno and Barisan Nasional who refuse to accept we did badly in 2008 because we did not meet the people's expectations in carrying out reforms.

“They think that we did not do well because we allowed too much discourse and openness to the people and the opposition. And it is these people who are set in doing things the old way. This, I believe, is Najib's biggest challenge.” – August 7, 2013.

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