

Dr M sulks to keep Najib in line
Malaysian Insider
Aug 18, 2014
COMMENTARY BY THE MALAYSIAN INSIDER

Just what is the impact of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad withdrawing his support for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak?

The former prime minister's ominous warning and verbal assault on Najib sounded like the volley of words in 2006 that kicked off a sustained campaign of poison against Tun Abdullah Badawi - a campaign that played a significant part in damaging Pak Lah before the general election in 2008.

But there are marked differences between then and now.

For a start, Dr Mahathir was able to shake Abdullah because he had the help of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and several other senior Umno politicians who were able to create the perception of a groundswell against Pak Lah, following the loss of Barisan Nasional's (BN) customary two-thirds majority in Parliament.

So not only was Dr Mahathir able to foment a mutiny against Abdullah outside Umno but he had his agents who were shaking his support in the supreme council. Even those who seemed to support him or were neutral were really part of the Mahathir-Muhyiddin gang.

Today, none of the top Umno leaders have accepted Dr Mahathir's invitation to mount the dismantling of Najib. Not Muhyiddin. Not Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi. Why?

Perhaps the incentive to lead or the allure of the job as PM of Malaysia is not great. The country is in a mess and there is substance to the missives aimed at Najib. His indecision and preference to stay silent and allow fringe groups to dominate the debate in this country have put Malaysia on the cusp of a race and religious meltdown.

Also, some of the potential challengers are still uncertain about Umno's prospects in the next general election. No one wants to go down in history as the man in power

when power in the centre was lost.

There will be attempts from Datuk Seri Najib Razak's camp to reach out to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (left) to appease him. – The Malaysian Insider file pic, August 18, 2014. There will be attempts from Datuk Seri Najib Razak's camp to reach out to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (left) to appease him. – The Malaysian Insider file pic, August 18, 2014. Dr Mahathir may also find that there is genuine fatigue in Umno for another bout of infighting.

Remember also that this is not a party of idealists or individuals with strong principles.

They are easily swayed by the ringgit and the promise of contracts and other forms of gratification. There are no qualms now about using the country's treasury for feel good projects and to gain popularity.

Finally, Abdullah did not have strong people by his side. So when things got a bit uncomfortable, he decided to leave rather than destroy Umno. Sure, his inner circle urged him to stay on, but he did not have the stomach to fight.

Najib is different. He wants to remain as the PM and occupy Seri Perdana as long as possible. There is a love for the trappings of the job and there will be no waving of the white flag.

There will also be no eloquent silence. There will be attempts from Najib's camp to reach out to Dr Mahathir and try and apply some balm to his hurt feelings.

This outreach could be in the form of acceding to some of his requests on financial aid for Proton or accommodating other demands.

At the same time, Najib's team will start working the ground to explain to Umno power brokers and the media the "real" reason for Dr Mahathir withdrawing support for Najib.

This parcel of information includes the government's decision not to build a bigger airport in Kedah and the administration's refusal to hand over the running of Malaysia Airlines to a well-connected businessman.

Will Mahathir get his way in pushing Najib out? Unlikely.

But that may not be his intention. He may just want to bring him in line - in line with Dr Mahathir's thinking. – August 18, 2014.

Hakipta © 2013 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/dr-m-sulks-to-keep-najib-in-line>