

by A Kadir Jasin

# Calling on John Nash of Umno

Punters can use their mathematical genius to come up with formulas and theories on the Umno divisional nominations.

**T**HE ever-resourceful punters must have thoroughly exploited the outcome of the Umno divisional nominations to come up with permutations that are most likely to make them rich.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi won the president's post when Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah failed to get the necessary number of nominations required to contest. He received a solitary nomination from his division, Gua Musang.

Abdullah's winning tally – 186 at the time of writing – is certainly a good bet if one is playing a three-digit game available at the licensed, as well as, illegal betting outlets.

Taking Tengku Razaleigh's solitary nomination and adding it to Abdullah's tally will make it four digits.

Irrespective of the arrangements, punters can easily try their luck at Pan Malaysia Pool's 3D and 1+3D draws, Magnum's Empat Nombor Ekor and Sports Toto's 4D and jackpots.

The mathematical possibilities are limitless and the hope they give to punters is infinite – the result of which is made amply clear by the billions the gaming companies rake in annually plus billions more by illegal operators.

And should a fraction of the punters use their mathematical genius to come up with some mathematical formulas and theories,

Malaysia could very well be producing Nobel Prize candidates in the light of John Nash, the schizophrenic Princeton, mathematics professor, who was immortalised in the 2001 Oscar-winning movie *A Beautiful Mind* starring Australian actor Russell Crowe.

Or they can give new meaning to the games theory that earned Nash his Nobel Prize in 1994. Why not? After all, politics is as much a game as it is a gamble.

Tengku Razaleigh gambled not only his luck, but also his reputation when he announced not too long ago that he was willing to contest the president's post.

## STOP HORSEING AROUND

**AS** is the case with mathematical theories, politics has as much imponderables and uncertainties. The figures may not add up and the proponents may end up as a mere footnote in history.

But Tengku Razaleigh is not a starry-eyed political novice. He is a veteran who has clocked over 40 years of travel on the political rough road. He's had his share of ups and downs.

So, it did not make sense for him to openly declare his willingness to be nominated to challenge Abdullah unless he had made sufficient investigation to

determine if there was going to be support for his endeavour.

It is not in his nature to act on impulse. He is not a rebel rouser. Neither is he a cynic and sceptic, although some comments attributed to him lately suggest that there is a tinge of both. What is more likely in the present case is that he has miscalculated the mood of the party.

He could have received sufficient pledges from leaders and divisions assuring him that they would nominate him at their divisional meetings if he would make his intention clear.

But, as it turned out, he lost the gamble because his horses did not run. Either they were coerced into not running or had a voluntary change of mind. Whatever the case was, they did to Tengku Razaleigh what punters dreaded most – course scratching.

This scribe learned a fair bit about horse racing when horsing around in New Zealand in 1971 as part of a one-year journalism course funded by the Colombo Plan.

Prodded and funded by Lucy McIntyre - my host - I took some bets at the Wanganui Race and lost squarely. Many a time the horses I bet on did not even leave the paddock. My horse-betting days came to an abrupt end.

But, horse racing is in the news again on account that the Selangor Turf Club race course in Seri Kembangan, to the south of Kuala Lumpur, which was set up less than a decade ago after having moved from Jalan Ampang in the city, would once again be moved – this time northward.

The first site transfer was franchised to gaming and multimedia mogul T Ananda Krishnan. Now the northward transfer is being franchised to an equally formidable gaming and media tycoon Tan Sri Vincent Tan.

## WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND

**THE** game of number forecasting is fascinating. Mathematics is, after all, the basic of all logic.

But, it was clear from the start that Tengku Razaleigh stood no chance of getting the required number of nominations to challenge Abdullah. Too many things were acting against him.

Even Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has steered clear of politics since retiring eight months ago, broke his silence to speak up against Tengku Razaleigh's bid.

In nearly all the divisions, the support for Abdullah was unanimous.

Starting with the branches, delegates and members were united in their choice. They wanted Abdullah to be confirmed as Umno president, the post he held in acting capacity since Dr Mahathir's exit last October.

Come September, when the party meets for its annual general assembly, Abdullah will be proclaimed the sixth president of the 58-year-old organisation, thereby completing his leadership ascension.

For Tengku Razaleigh, it was not a lost cause altogether. By his act, he proved that in Umno one could freely offer oneself for election if he or she is brave or committed enough to his or her cause.

What stood in the way of Tengku Razaleigh and, to a lesser degree, other unsuccessful aspirants were the hurdles put up by the party in the last one and a half decades that made the task of challenging for top posts difficult.

Of course, Tengku Razaleigh is all too familiar with these strict rules. Most of them were put up following his unsuccessful challenge against Dr Mahathir for the presidency of the party in 1987.

One of the hardest to cross is the provision that contenders for the posts of president, deputy president, vice-presidents and Supreme Council members must receive a certain percentage of divisional nominations.

According to a *New Straits Times* report, Tengku Razaleigh has to get at least 58 divisional nominations before he would be allowed to compete for the president's post in the September elections.

Before the amendment, all that a candidate needed to contest any post was two nominations from the divisions.

Maybe the Malays in Umno do not forget as easily as Dr Mahathir thought they would – at least not in the case of Tengku Razaleigh. His bitter 1987 challenge against Dr Mahathir, which counted Abdullah among his key supporters, has come back to haunt him.

Even before he made his intention known, the party had been talking about

unity and warning about a possible rift if the top two posts were subjected to contest.

## HOW IT ALL STARTED

**THERE** was coffee shop talk that Tengku Razaleigh was not very happy with the goings-on in the party since the recent general elections.

For Tengku Razaleigh, there was nothing much to lose. He has done his time and is the last of his generation to remain in the Supreme Council. He was appointed to the council soon after returning to Umno's fold by Dr Mahathir.

Although Abdullah was in Tengku Razaleigh's team in the 1987 challenge, they are two different personalities altogether. They came together only to oppose Dr Mahathir.

At that time, Abdullah was a middle ranking member of Mahathir's Cabinet, having been promoted to a full minister months after Dr Mahathir became Prime Minister in 1981. He was made Education Minister two years later.

Tengku Razaleigh, on the other hand, suffered a setback when a political outsider, Tun Daim Zainuddin (then only an *Encik*), replaced him as Finance Minister.

Still Dr Mahathir gave him a senior appointment as Trade and Industry Minister, the post that Dr Mahathir himself held when he was Deputy Prime Minister.

But, it wasn't Tengku Razaleigh who drew Abdullah to 'Team B'. Abdullah threw his lot with the opponents of Dr Mahathir on account of Tan Sri Musa Hitam who resigned as Deputy Prime Minister a year earlier.

The challenge against Dr Mahathir in 1987 was, in fact, mounted by a collection of leaders who were opposed to each other, but ganged up to form 'Team B' because Dr Mahathir was their common enemy.

For most part, the team members were unhappy that Dr Mahathir had brought in outsiders, namely Daim, to manage the country's and party's finances and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to become the party's ideologue.

But, while Tengku Razaleigh and a handful of 'Team B' leaders left to form the now defunct Party Melayu Semangat 46 after failing to dethrone Dr Mahathir, Abdullah remained loyal to Umno.

## PLAYING FAIR AND SQUARE

**DESPITE** the harm they did to Umno during their hiatus, including the formation of an alliance with Pas and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) that culminated in the Barisan Nasional's (BN) defeat in Kelantan and Sabah respectively in the 1990 general elections, Dr Mahathir still accepted Tengku Razaleigh and his followers back into Umno.

It was his way of reuniting Umno and acknowledging Tengku Razaleigh as a worthy adversary. With Dr Mahathir's retirement last year, Tengku Razaleigh remains the only Supreme Council member of that generation.

Aside from unity, Dr Mahathir brought Tengku Razaleigh back as an acknowledgement of his vast contributions to the party and country. The two men were key figures in the Tun Razak administration. While Dr Mahathir was his key political operator, Tengku Razaleigh was his economic czar.

As Dr Mahathir tackled sensitive political issues like Malay poverty and campus rebellion in the post-May 13, 1969 period in his capacity as chairman of the higher education council and later as Education Minister, Tengku Razaleigh presided over economic and financial matters as chairman of a handful of Bumiputera agencies and played a key role in the formation of the national petroleum company, Petronas.

For that reason alone, Umno and the Government should give close attention to Tengku Razaleigh's recent statement that poverty, especially among the rural people, is on the rise. Back in the seventies, he pioneered the development of Kelantan after the fall of the PAS government in the state.

Tengku Razaleigh was also closely connected to Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdul Najib Tun Razak, having tutored him at Petronas and other places, on economics and administration.

Of course no politician, especially if he or she is as influential as Tengku Razaleigh, could escape from being the victim of irony.

For Tengku Razaleigh, the biggest irony in the current phase of his political career was being strongly criticised by the *New Straits Times (NST)* newspaper for his

attempt to challenge Abdullah.

For all intents and purposes, the *NST* was his creation. It was one of his many crowning achievements that have largely been forgotten or not known by the younger generation.

It was Tengku Razaleigh who, on the instructions of Tun Razak, pioneered the takeover of the Malaysian operations of the Singapore-based *Straits Times* that led to the formation of the New Straits Time Press (Malaysia) Bhd in the early seventies.

Of course, as so many politicians here and around the world have come to realise, media ownership and control were not the magic wand that could make everything happen.

In fact, those who have seen the movie *Shrek 2* would have realised that the magic wand that turned the evil king into a toad also caused the devious fairy godmother to disintegrate.

Perhaps because he realised all along this was not a fairy tale, Tengku Razaleigh immediately commended Abdullah and pledged his support when it became apparent that his challenge was not getting anywhere.

## A GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS

**WOULD** Tengku Razaleigh still have a chance to remain in the Supreme Council? It depends on Abdullah and Tengku Razaleigh's own choice. Maybe this is Tengku Razaleigh's way of putting a full stop to his political career.

The game of numbers can be a useful pointer. In Nash's theory of games, opposing sides either battle to the death (zero-sum) or they cooperate to produce a win-win situation.

In 1950, Nash then 21-years-old, wrote a 27-page dissertation entitled *Non-Cooperative Games* that would later earn him the Nobel Prize.

Whereas proponents of the theory of games, John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern were able to solve only the non-cooperative games in the case of pure rivalries (zero-sum), the young Nash turned to rivalries with mutual gain.

So, maybe the Umno crowd should join the punters in analysing the various figures that have so far come out of the divisional meetings, not for purposes of gambling,

which to my mind is a case of zero-sum (you either strike or you don't), but to see who stands where and if a win-win situation is possible.

With the posts of president and deputy president decided – the latter goes to Najib – the focus is on the race for the three vice-president (VP) slots and Supreme Council seats.

The incumbent VP Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin looks set to retain the post. With Najib promoted, the Agriculture Minister already marshalled the most number of divisional nominations (159 by July 26). It is almost a certainty that he will get the highest votes come September.

But, the star performer to date is Melaka Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam. Coming literally out of nowhere, he has so far obtained 119 divisional nominations that have put him ahead of incumbent Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, the former Selangor Menteri Besar, with 88 nominations.

Mohd Ali's phenomenal rise suggests not so much his administrative capability, since he is still fairly junior, but rather his astute public relations and politics of accommodation.

To begin with, Mohd Ali has been extremely generous with the offer of state awards to politicians, businessmen and journalists since he became Chief Minister in 1999. That certainly earns him a lot of goodwill among the status conscious Umno crowd.

His involvement in youth movements – he was former president of the World Assembly of Youth and national president of the 4B Youth Movement – is another noticeable feather in his cap. And he led the state BN to sterling victory in the recent general elections.

Still, some observers believe that he would not have received such decisive support from the divisions without some good words from the power elite, meaning the people close to the administration.

For Muhammad, the fact that he is the third most popular candidate says a lot about his personality. Despite not holding any government post since resigning as Menteri Besar in 1997, he is still widely respected and loved.

If Umno believes in the division of power and in the dichotomy between the party and

the Government, Muhammad should not have too much difficulty retaining the job.

That leaves a big question mark for the next most popular contender – Minister in the Prime Minister's Department and the head of Kelantan Umno Datuk Mustapa Mohamed. He came fourth with 66 nominations.

The other eligible candidates – Federal Territory Minister Tan Sri Mohd Isa Samad, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, head of BN backbenchers Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar – are a distance away from the main contenders.


The race for the 25 Supreme Council seats is even keener. More than 60 candidates have so far received the required number of nominations to contest. The top contenders are made up largely of Ministers, Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers.

And to provide punters with a final set of numbers to play around with in their quest for fortune, it is worthwhile for this scribe to state that the most popular candidate to date is Women and Family Development Minister, Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

She received 189 nominations and retained the post of deputy head of the Wanita movement. Its head, Datuk Paduka Rafidah Aziz also won uncontested when former National Unity Minister Datuk Seri Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman failed to get sufficient nominations.

But, there is nowhere that the democratic ideals are so well nurtured than in the youthful Puteri Umno movement. The race for its two top posts shows that young Malay women are up to the challenge.

Its deputy head, Noraini Ahmad with 155 nominations is being challenged for the post of Puteri head by the State Assemblywoman for Sungai Tiang, Kedah, Suyara Yaacob who received 32 nominations.

For the post of deputy head, four candidates are eligible to contest. They are Rosnah Abdul Rashid, Bibi Sharliza Khalid, Azalinda Mohd Rashad and Shahaniza Shamsuddin. 

E-mail: [akadirjasin@beritapub.com.my](mailto:akadirjasin@beritapub.com.my)  
Besides *Malaysian Business*, Kadir also contributes to local Bahasa Malaysia and English newspapers. These articles can be accessed at [www.beritapublishing.com.my](http://www.beritapublishing.com.my) under the heading 'In My Own Write'.