



**Abdullah  
Badawi's  
DILEMMA**

**Yahaya Ismail**

**USAHA TEGUH SDN BHD**

**2003**

## USAHA TEGUH SENDIRIAN BERHAD

Peti Surat 8759, Kelana Jaya

46797 Petaling Jaya

Selangor Darul Ehsan

© Yahaya Ismail, February 2003

First Printing 2003

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, store in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.*

ISBN 983-2236-03-7

**M** / 1107033

Printed by : KUM-VIVAR PRINTING SDN BHD

Price : RM34.90

M

320.9595

YAH

29 MAY 2003

Perpustakaan Negara  
Malaysia

# CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	vi
---------------------	----

## Chapter

One - MAHATHIR'S PARTING SHOTS	1
Two - THE ROAD TO POWER	17
Three - THE ODDS AGAINST ANWAR	43
Four - ANWAR : A DOOMED LEADER	63
Five - WHY MAHATHIR CHOSE ABDULLAH BADAWI?	83
Six - THE THREE VICE PRESIDENTS	113
Seven - TG RAZALEIGH : THE MAN TO WATCH	135
Eight - RAFIDAH AZIZ AS NUMBER TWO	153
Nine - RAIS YATIM AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER	181
Ten - PRIME MINISTER IN TRANSIT?	213

## ❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

*M*alaysian politics after Mahathir will be very interesting to watch since his successor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, is Mahathir's choice that has yet to be endorsed and accepted by the UMNO delegates. Abdullah retains his deputy president's post without being challenged because UMNO Supreme Council passed a resolution that denied the two top posts to be contested. UMNO itself has postponed its meeting for the election of office bearers of Supreme Council after the general election, which many observers believed, would be held in April or May next year. Mahathir's departure from active politics beginning this October will push Abdullah Badawi to be the leader who will determine the success or failure of UMNO in particular and Barisan Nasional government in general.

This coming election will be the barometer to judge and evaluate the success or failure of his leadership. Having broken out from Mahathir's cocoon Abdullah will be at his own steam to guide his own political fate as well as the driving force of the government. However, if he fails in his mission to achieve better election results for UMNO in particular and Barisan Nasional in general, then, he would be under strong pressure to retain his premiership. Others may challenge his leadership of course. At present, too, there are leaders who are preparing for the showdown in the coming UMNO election in 2004.

Since he is the anointed successor as premier Abdullah has been the center of focus by all interested groups, inside and outside the country. Many groups in Malaysia are skeptical of his leadership quality when they compare the dynamism of Mahathir with him. Being a bureaucrat of over two decades he is considered a man who practices consensus, slow in decision making, too cautious, and at times, lacks depth and foresight. This is the first time in post independent Malaysia a former senior civil servant is given the privilege to lead UMNO as well as the government of the country. Whether he can achieve miracles for his success or succumb to failure will be clearly seen in the coming national election. Abdullah's fate is in the balance that can tilt either way if God disposes what he proposes, and if the rakyat decide to go against his leadership too.

Political instability and conflicts in UMNO can trigger instability in the government because UMNO is the dominating party that guides the destiny of the country and the multiracial society since independence. Therefore other component parties of Barisan Nasional and the private sector too are very concerned of the kind of leadership accepted and voted by UMNO. The fear of money politics and the corruption of leaders and delegates which incurred the wrath of Mahathir in his presidential speech in an UMNO annual general meeting a couple of years ago, would rear its ugly head again if no punitive action taken to stem it. Corrupted delegates would condone and endorse corrupted leaders who, holding the seat of power, would be weak to face the challenges of the

time. The country would be in ruin, the people disappointed and political instability creeps in. If known corrupted and weak leaders were to win their seats in the Supreme Council then that would be the end of the era of UMNO's credibility as the most powerful party that dominates the government of the country.

This book intends to give different viewpoints on UMNO leadership with the hope it would bring awareness and positive actions those in power to put the interests of the nation and her people above personal gains. UMNO, being the oldest political party in power, needs rejuvenation as well as overhauling its current materialistic values that smell of moral decadence, avarice and self-interest. The old struggle and great sacrifice of UMNO for the country, religion and the people must be rekindled and given new lease of life in this global era of challenge. Though a Malay political party UMNO is being looked upon as the protector of all rakyat irrespective of their racial origins, religions, cultures and ways of life. The forefathers of UMNO had shown to the world the real meaning of tolerance, unity in diversity, respect one another, the brotherhood of mankind and liberalism in the pursuit of knowledge. This is the secret recipe of our success brought about by UMNO leaders from the era of Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Tun Hussein Onn to that of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. These are the leaders who leave the legacy of good leadership which bring unity, peace and harmony among the people.

The challenge faced by Abdullah to fulfill the

aspirations of Malaysians is great and taxing. The country needs strong and dynamic leadership that can transform and shape the destiny of the nation without fear to face all challenges. However, Abdullah had never face great challenge in politics before. When he was aligned to Team B of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah he never make any commitment to the cause. Instead he stays put with UMNO and accepts Mahathir's leadership. Therefore his great track record as a leader of substance is yet to be seen. Compared to Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Musa Hitam and Dr Rais Yatim, Abdullah is still considered as an ordinary, hardworking politician who applauds with gusto from the spectator's gallery. That is the impression he made.

It is just a stroke of good luck that made him what he is today. Luck alone cannot help him to shoulder the great responsibility as future prime minister. Luck flies in and out without notice what more to help him becoming a great and effective leader. He must know his weaknesses and the strength that he has. It is the kind of leadership that he offers to the people and the government that will decide his future to be accepted with joy or rejected with contempt. It is his choice.

Bearing in mind that Abdullah has been in Mahathir's cocoon until given the golden opportunity to lead the party and the country this October therefore it is natural for people to be skeptical of his ability to be the top leader of the country. People are worried, disturbed, and doubtful of their future if he is proved to be inferior in leadership qualities. Many want him to appoint a strong, reliable and very experienced

politician to be deputy prime minister in order to have a good and effective teamwork. He must cast aside his ego and pride in appointing a high caliber politician as his deputy. For the sake of the country and the good of the people Abdullah has no alternative except to choose a very experienced leader to help him in shaping the history of our nation.

I hope Abdullah, his cronies and supporters would not be rattled with anger by the views expressed in this book. As a citizen and a patriot I have the same right as him in expressing my views for the good of our country. If he puts national interest above his petty politics then people will shower credit and praise on him. The power that he has belongs to the people. It is not to be shared among relatives, friends and hangers-on for their own benefit. Today he can be the most powerful person in the country. Tomorrow he may lose the power with lightning speed if God denies it.

I hope this book will enlighten readers of Malaysian politics. You may agree with me, or cross swords with me. You have the right to differ. After all not every one shares similar ideas on anything - including Malaysian politics.

Thank you.

Yahaya Ismail  
February 2003

## *Chapter One*

# **MAHATHIR'S PARTING SHOTS**

**D**r Mahathir's speech, charged with emotion, brought shock waves to the Malays in particular and Malaysians in general. Trying to control his tears and emotion UMNO president has decided to relinquish all his political posts as well as head of government, and told the shocked UMNO delegates and observers that Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, popularly known as Pak Lah, will be the next prime minister, and the next UMNO president. Though there were cries of support wanting Mahathir to stay on at the saddle of power but none could influence him to reconsider his decision. As the most highly respected Malaysian leader, at home and abroad,

Mahathir's unexpected speech left the rakyat speechless, shocked, and worried. He has stubbornly stood his stand. No one could influence him to change his mind. Come October 2003 Dr Mahathir Mohamad will no longer be the prime minister.

That emotional speech on 22<sup>nd</sup> June at the 55<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting of UMNO has created history that will never be forgotten by all Malaysians. Never in the history of Malaysian politics, or for that matter most countries of the world, a prime minister would voluntarily relinquish all his government and party positions while at the pinnacle of his success and popularity. For 22 long years Mahathir has been the leader who shapes the destiny of the nation, plotting and charting his ways against all challenges with guts and political maneuverings in order to turn Malaysia into a dynamic, modern and progressive country. Basking in the glory of his political success and being recognised as a world-class leader one would expect Mahathir to continue his missions to lead the country and be at Putrajaya until his last breath in office. Not Mahathir. That shocks the nation and makes people to realise that some one else, a Mahathir appointee, will continue to shape and be shaken, lead successfully or be drowned in problems, in the turbulent months and years ahead.

That lucky man, chosen by Mahathir, is Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi better known as Pak Lah to many. Since Mahathir's emotional speech in June until this coming October 2003 Pak Lah will be torn with anxiety and agony in facing the challenges of daily

political menu as the next prime minister and president of UMNO if he wins the confidence and support of the delegates. He will be at the center of attention, his every word dissected, analysed his every move monitored, his private life too would be whispered, rumoured and digested with glee or disgust depending on the political sentiment of the rumourmongers. Being tipped to be number one in the government next October Pak Lah is under the scrutiny of various interested groups and parties, the oppositions and the component BN parties alike. His political rivals in UMNO, greedy and ambitious, have already planned strategies to make their presence felt and their power acknowledged by UMNO members and their divisional leaders throughout the country. Pak Lah, ever cautious, tactful and full of diplomacy, will monitor every move made by his rivals so as not to be off-guarded. For the moment they will let Pak Lah basking in the limelight and dream of being the next prime minister and UMNO president. No sweat. The D-Day has not arrived yet. Like hungry tigers they will wait patiently, building their resources and reaching their political tentacles far and wide, waiting for the ripe moment to strike, challenge and topple Pak Lah.

At present the great respect for Mahathir has eroded any form of protest against his choice of his successor. They do not want to rock the UMNO boat now while Mahathir is still their leader and prime minister of the country. For the moment they will keep their true feelings close to their hearts. This is not the

right time to challenge Mahathir's choice. UMNO must be consolidated, strong and united to face the challenges of Pas, its main political enemy that has been making inroads into the Malay belt states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis, Kedah dan also Pahang. The results of recent by-elections at Anak Bukit and Pendang clearly exposed to the nation that Pas is deeply entrenched in Kedah, and the failure of wrestling Anak Bukit, an urban constituency, from Pas rings the bell that UMNO is in hot soup. Kedah, the bastion of UMNO and the birthplace of Dr Mahathir, would be the third state to be toppled by Pas in the coming national election if UMNO Kedah leadership is weak while Pas is getting the upper hand in influencing the Malay masses.

A wafer thin majority margin of 208 votes for Othman Abdul (UMNO) in Pendang in the last by-election does not augur well with UMNO's political influence in the rice producing state of Kedah. With a weak, and colourless menteri besar, Kedah will be the pawn in the game of UMNO and Pas politics, and if left to the whims and fancies of a weak leader like Syed Razak to steer the so called Kedah's "nirvana" of 2010, a pipe dream of a well-developed state, many reckon Kedah will fall to Pas in the coming election.

Pas has become more militant, very vocal and daring in attacking UMNO leadership and the government. Mursyidul Am (the spiritual leader) of Pas, Datuk Nik Aziz bin Nik Mat, menteri besar of Kelantan, has become more intolerant of UMNO,

agitating the Malays to vote Pas in order "to go to heaven" and to accept *hudud* and the formation of an Islamic state replacing the "secular government" of Barisan Nasional. UMNO's rejection by the people of Kelantan in 1990 election, where Pas and Semangat 46 obtained 39 state seats to none to UMNO, brought shame and helplessness in UMNO camp to this day. It was a great shock that sent fear to UMNO leaders. Never in the history of UMNO politics it fails to win even a single seat at state level. The hatred against UMNO was overwhelming. Until the last election of 1999, after Tengku Razaleigh dissolved Semangat 46 and returned into UMNO's fold, Kelantan stays put with Pas. For three consecutive elections the people of Kelantan still adore and support Nik Aziz as their menteri besar and Pas their state government even though Nik Aziz fails to bring material developments to the state. To add insult to injury, in the last election of 1999 Terengganu BN government under ulama Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad too was toppled by Pas leaving four helpless UMNO state assemblymen as the opposition members in the State Assembly. Another ulama highly-regarded by Pas members and sympathizers, Datuk Seri Haji Hadi Awang, has become the new menteri besar of Terengganu replacing Wan Mokhtar. Wan Mokhtar and his cronies were rejected and thrown out of the government by the people of his state. For two decades he was the menteri besar of Terengganu, enjoying millions of ringgit in the form of oil royalty given by Petronas, building and developing the state with the oil royalty,

yet he and UMNO were driven out from Darul Iman, the seat of government, at Kuala Terengganu. Today he becomes our ambassador in Saudi Arabia, "a self imposed exile" to distant himself from the leftover of his decadent leadership.

Pas also managed to make inroads into Kedah where it gained 12 state seats in addition to eight parliamentary seats pitting professionals such as lecturers, engineers, doctors and accountants against Syed Razak, the menteri besar, who was only a form five "graduate". Besides, in a bye-election of the state seat of Lunas, another opposition member from KeADILan won the seat leaving the present state government of Kedah without a two-third majority. Kedah is in a critical position for UMNO. With Mahathir leaving the political scene and not wanting to seek reelection in Kubang Pasu, his traditional seat since 1974, many believe Kubang Pasu would fall to Pas. Without Mahathir in power and Kedah under a weak leader like Syed Razak, the stage is set for a Pas takeover of the state government. It will be a great blow to Mahathir if Pas were successful informing next state government. It will give more problems too to Pak Lah.

UMNO too is facing problems in Pahang where Pas was able to win six state seats, KeADILan one and another seat fell to DAP in the last election. Adnan Yaakob, the menteri besar, is said to be facing great problems in tackling Pas's inroads into the Felda land schemes and other Malay majority constituencies. Adnan himself does not perform well and considered

weak in bridging the gap between the government and the Malay masses who have been under the influence of Pas. Furthermore the rivalries between Datuk Najib Tun Razak and Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob in Pahang help to weaken the UMNO position further making it very difficult for Adnan to wield his influence over these two old rivals. Pas leaders and workers, since the last election, untiringly and patiently persue their campaign into the bastions of UMNO trying their best to demolish the UMNO influence and making the rakyat to support Pas. Najib for one knew the wrath of the people against his leadership when he only managed to scrape through with a thin majority of less than 300 votes in Pekan in the last election!

Say what you like Pas has made great inroads into UMNO enclaves in other states too. Since last election Pas has representatives in Penang State Assembly with Dr.Wan Azizah Ismail, wife of Anwar Ibrahim, the president of KeADILan holding the fort in the parliamentary seat of Permatang Pauh. In Perak Dr Hassan Ali, from Pas, has been elected by the people of Simpang Lima to be their parliamentary representative in Kuala Lumpur. It also won in Parit. Selangor too Pas and KeADILan have their share of state seats in the state assembly. In other words, Pas has become a big threat to UMNO after its great success in the last election. Now UMNO feels the great pressure to resurrect its deflated image, trying its best to maintain credibility as the protector of the Malays, Islam and the political power that be.

This is the political scenario of UMNO today.

Every UMNO leader knows he will face tough fight to maintain a two-third majority in Parliament, and to fight the onslaught of Pas in all the Malay belt states. Even though UMNO is facing a big battle to hold to its power yet the infighting among UMNO leaders never subside. The pursuit for power and better positions in the party hierarchy and the government drive some of these ambitious leaders to form cliques in order to maintain group support for the coming battle for Supreme Council posts later.

For the sake of their future in UMNO, all vested-interest groups and opportunistic leaders would not rock the boat at the moment. No need for them to antagonize the leadership now. Build up strong power base and supporters first so as to instill fear in Pak Lah, and if possible, negotiate for certain deals for their future either for the cabinet posts or getting other state appointments as menteri besar, exco members, and above all, given certain projects that would make them instant millionaires! The time is not yet ripe for battle of top posts in the party either at Supreme Council level or divisional levels. This is the time to explore new relationships among leaders, cement understandings and mutual help for future commitments besides seeking projects that will give them the needed fund to oil their political machinery and supporting their "gurkhas". Since Mahathir had anointed Pak Lah as his successor many aspiring candidates, divisional heads and entrepreneurs of various backgrounds would crowd into Pak Lah's bandwagon hoping to be taken in and accepted as his

followers and gurkhas. Do not be surprised if many volunteer to be his gurkhas. Others strutting and claiming to be Pak Lah's men trying to make some fast bucks in conning those who aspire to be close to the future prime minister. Don't be surprised if you find leaders who were at one time aligned to Anwar Ibrahim suddenly, meekly and unashamedly, identified themselves as Pak Lah's henchmen today. These political hypocrites are jostling for attention and positions, and those who are in power, are trying to maintain their status quo hoping Pak Lah would not leave them in the limbo after becoming the premier of the country.

Since 1987 UMNO has been nurturing and promoting materialistic cultural values in the pursuit for political power. Ambitious politicians and corporate figures are willing to sponsor these delegates for the meeting for it is a form of investment for them in the future. As years gone by money politics has become deeply entrenched in the psychic mind of UMNO members so much so it has brought anguish and emotional pains to Mahathir who cajoled and pleaded to members and leaders alike, requesting them to reject money politics and uphold the integrity and incorruptible leadership. Unfortunately, all fall to deaf ears. Money politics will rear its ugly head again and again in determining the UMNO leadership now and in the future. Those veteran UMNO members who have been delegates to UMNO annual conferences and responsible for the election of Supreme Council members, once in three years, said most of the

delegates accepted money and other gifts from various aspiring leaders for the Supreme Council and the Youth movement in exchange for their votes. It is an open secret. If you don't do it, they say, your enemies will do it in order to win votes and positions in the political hierarchy. It must be stated not all top leaders are corrupting their own party delegates. Only a few abhor it, hate it, and never buy votes. Yet they still win their place in the UMNO Supreme Council.

Having this as the backdrop in UMNO politics one would not be surprised if the battle for party leadership in the coming election of Supreme Council members would be keenly contested. It has become the talk in coffee shops, coffee houses and surau that whether one likes it or not, all positions in the party leadership would be open for grab.

If this were to happen Pak Lah's position as the anointed leader would be challenged. This will be a bitter test of his leadership. If he survives and wins the presidency with a clear majority then, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, can be considered as a powerful UMNO leader that has the backing and support of the majority in his own party. In other words, the party has endorsed Mahathir's choice as a successor. That would calm down the heat in the party, and it would give a better chance for Pak Lah to retain and maintain his leadership of UMNO and the government.

For these sixteen months, after Mahathir's parting shots at the UMNO annual assembly last June, Pak Lah will have sleepless nights, torn with agony and anxiety, to prove to the rakyat that Mahathir has made

the best and right decision in making him the future prime minister. After October he will leave Mahathir's cocoon and be on his own in charting the destiny of the nation. It will be tough and rough. The road to the top is not smooth sailing for Pak Lah. Danger looms everywhere unexpectedly. He must be constantly alert, quick in making decisions, fast in actions.

In politics everything is possible. History has been made on the spur of the moment. A man's fortune, for better or for worse, can be determined by a fleeting breath of time. Man proposes but Allah disposes. These sixteen months will be the most crucial part in the history of Pak Lah's leadership whether he will be accepted with open arms by UMNO delegates which means an endorsement of Mahathir's choice or being rejected.. If rejected it means the UMNO delegates ignore Mahathir's choice. If this unfortunate incident happens then it means the delegates have forgotten Mahathir and all the great contributions and sacrifices done by him for UMNO, the Malays, Islam and the country.

If his rival is installed as the popular choice to lead UMNO, then he has no alternative but to accept the decision of the majority. If Pak Lah loses the contest for presidency, then he has no alternative except to resign his post as prime minister. According to Barisan Nasional tradition since independence the president of UMNO would be the prime minister of the country. UMNO president can only become the prime minister if he wins a parliamentary seat in the election thus giving him the power and the privilege

to be appointed as the prime minister of Malaysia. All four former and present prime ministers were challenged for leadership by others. Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, for one, was challenged by Haji Ahmad Fuad for the presidency of the party. Ahmad Fuad lost, and left UMNO to form Pas as his new political vehicle. When Tun Abdul Razak was the prime minister and Tengku left the national political scene after the racial riot of May 13th, 1969 Datuk Harun Idris, the former menteri besar of Selangor who was then the UMNO Youth leader, challenged Tun Razak. He was defeated, and Razak continued to lead the country until his death. Succeeding Razak as the prime minister was Tun Hussein Onn. A veteran UMNO leader from Penang, Haji Sulaiman Palestin challenged Hussein but was defeated. Due to health reason and mounting problems in UMNO especially the call for the pardon of Datuk Harun Idris, former menteri besar who was sentenced to a four-year jail term for corruption by pro Harun group, Tun Hussein finally retired from politics, and Dr Mahathir took the rein of the party and the country. It was in 1987 party election that the battle royal between Mahathir and Ghafar Baba on one side and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Musa Hitam on the other, took place. It split UMNO into two halves. That battle for power was the bitterest fight of political survival for Mahathir that becomes the landmark in the turbulent challenge for power in this most powerful and influential Malay political party. Razaleigh and followers, cut off from UMNO Baru initiated by Mahathir, formed Parti

Melayu Semangat 46 and plunged into election battles twice in 1990 and 1995 to dislodge Mahathir from power. Unfortunately the hearts and souls of the majority rakyat were and are with Mahathir until today. Realising their fruitless fight as an opposition party and their political marriage of convenience with Pas was a liability, Razaleigh and his followers rejoined UMNO and dissolved Semangat 46 without regret. Pak Lah was once with Team B of Tengku Razaleigh but stopped short of joining Semangat 46. Pak Lah, torn between the leadership of Razaleigh and Mahathir, finally stayed put with Mahathir. He is loyal to the spirit of UMNO and was willing to face anything to be with UMNO. For his political digression and "disloyalty" being with Team B, Mahathir dropped him from his cabinet for a term, but Pak Lah stood stoically with UMNO.

His patience pays dividen. Most likely Pak Lah and others never thought that one day this son of an ulama from Kepala Batas would be the future prime minister. Being reappointed once again into the cabinet Pak Lah was grateful to be accepted and recognized by Mahathir that he has an important role to play in the party as well as the government. When he was made the foreign minister, after leaving in the limbo for a term, Pak Lah was more in foreign lands rather than in the country to look after his political interest. He was busy performing his duty as a foreign minister so much so he was neglecting his constituency for some time. Meanwhile Anwar Ibrahim, who was deputy prime minister cum minister of finance plus

as chairman of Penang UMNO State Liaison Committee, a position once headed by Pak Lah, made sure that Pak Lah would not gain much support from Penang UMNO divisions. Anwar, though powerful as deputy president cum deputy prime minister then, considered Pak Lah as his rival, and a stumbling block for him to control all UMNO divisions in the state. In other words, Anwar wanted to be the undisputed leader in Penang, unchallenged by every one including Pak Lah. Unfortunately for Mahathir, his protégé, Anwar Ibrahim, thinking that he was powerful and could turn the table against his mentor, plotted and plan strategies to unseat the prime minister. Empty rhetoric and soothing praise by Anwar did not impress Mahathir, knowing his deputy was a Brutus waiting impatiently for the day to wrestle the power from him. He, with the power and experience of a veteran politician, check-mated Anwar by dismissing him from the cabinet as well as UMNO. It was during Anwar's sojourn in UMNO that the Supreme Council made a decision to retain Mahathir and Anwar as president and deputy president respectively. Thus there was no challenge for the these two important posts. The decision was made because UMNO was split into two opposing camps, Mahathir and Anwar, which if unchecked, would create political chaos in the country.

Being ambitious and impatient Anwar had to play his cards well for fear of confrontation with his boss who was already aware of his maneuverings. Most of the members of the UMNO Supreme Council, including the three vice presidents, namely Najib,

Mohamad Mohd Taib and Muhyiddin were Anwar's men in *Wawasan Team*. They were only playing second fiddle and danced to the tune of Anwar. It was said that Anwar deliberately wanted to show his loyalty, respect and reverence for Mahathir that prompted the Supreme Council to make resolution refraining the two posts being contested. Unfortunately luck was not on Anwar's side. Mahathir could smell the treachery and hypocrisy of his deputy and the role he played as a modern day Brutus. The rivalries between the two came to a climax when Anwar was brought to court and sentenced to six years in prison for abuse of power. In adding to it Anwar was also unmasked as a homosexual and obtained another nine years for his homosexual sins. The bitternests and enmity enemies between them never end. Until today Anwar bears vengeance and grudges against Mahathir that will never die. He was put to shame as a homosexual, and above all, dismissed with contempt, from the cabinet and UMNO itself. Marooned and isolated in a simple room at Sungai Buloh prison Anwar will never forgive Mahathir and those who dragged him to ignominy.

The precedent has been created when two top party posts were not to be contested but preserved for the incumbents. That saved Mahathir as well as Anwar. It shows that political survival at the top UMNO leadership could be achieved by a resolution of the Supreme Council to preserve the two posts for the incumbents. Of course, the action is considered undemocratic. Similar episode was repeated when the

Supreme Council again made a resolution to preserve the two top posts to Mahathir and Pak Lah in the 2000 UMNO general meeting for the election of new Supreme Council members. This time the man to be saved was Pak Lah and the reason given by the said Supreme Council was to avoid unhealthy rivalries among leaders that would weaken the party leadership. This October Pak Lah will succeed Mahathir as prime minister and acting president of UMNO. Will party members accept him with open arms as their undisputed leader thus endorsing Mahathir's choice? Or will they pressure the Supreme Council to have all posts contested?. The road to power for Pak Lah is full of booby-traps, surprises and challenges that would put him always on his toes. Danger lurks everywhere, every time he makes political moves and actions. No smooth sailing for Pak Lah to maintain the leadership of the party and the government. If he miscalculates his political strength and influence among UMNO members, then, he would be in trouble waters soon. It is an uneasy truce, a temporary lull before the storm. And Pak Lah realizes it. So are his rivals and the rakyat in general.

## *Chapter Two*

# THE ROAD TO POWER

*F*or 22 years in the saddle of power Dr Mahathir has transformed Malaysia from an agricultural producing country into a dynamic industrial nation by the year 2020. Friends and foes alike would agree that Mahathir has revolutionised the thinking of Malaysians from simplistic peasantry into a modern, liberal and tolerant multiracial society that dares to face the challenges of the world. The spirit of "Malaysia Boleh" (Malaysia Can) with a strong emphasis on science and technology, the pursuit of knowledge, make Malaysians more self-confident, to explore new avenues for greater height of success. Besides the pursuit of wealth and a betterment of

everyday life for the rakyat Mahathir's Vision 2020 also emphasises the inherent spiritual values of religions in order to give a balance between the spiritual and the material pursuits.

Though previous prime ministers had contributed something of substance for the development of the country but none can surpass the great contributions of Mahathir in revolutionising and transforming the multiracial society to accept social changes and new dynamic values based on the quest for knowledge as enshrined in the Qoran. As the leader of BN government and UMNO Mahathir has undergone, tested and overcome all challenges to his power and leadership. In the struggle for power in 1987 he was challenged by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, the Kelantan prince, for the president's post in UMNO. It was a very crucial battle for Mahathir whose image was tarnished by many unpopular political decisions at that time. With Musa Hitam (Tan Sri) as his running mate, Tengku Razaleigh (Ku Li) and his loyal supporters were optimistic that both would be elected as the new president and deputy president of UMNO respectively. Unfortunately both the challengers were defeated by a small majority of votes. Mahathir won the day with a small majority of 41 votes, and his deputy, Ghafar Baba (Tun) by 43 votes. That shocked and shook Mahathir to the bone. He won by the whiskers. No previous prime minister faced such a critical phase of their struggle for power like that of Mahathir.

The result of the fight brought a big split in UMNO

and the leadership. Tengku Razaleigh and his band of followers had no place in UMNO after the bitter battle for power. Mahathir, shocked by the big slice of votes won by Razaleigh and Musa, had strengthened his grip for power and left no room for his rivals to unseat him in future. The animosity between the two leaders, Mahathir and Razaleigh, was so bitter that the battle for supremacy was left to the court. Tengku Razaleigh alleged that a number of UMNO delegates to the annual general meeting in 1987 came from some suspended branches, which according to law, considered illegal therefore the illegality of the general assembly. Tengku Razaleigh's group wanted the court to decide that the results of the election of UMNO Supreme Council members of that year was null and void. Therefore a fresh election of office bearers and another meeting of delegates should be instituted, and a fresh election of Supreme Council members be held..

As a response to such accusations Mahathir, being besieged and cornered for survival, took the initiative to have UMNO dissolved by the court. UMNO Baru was formed in its place. Those who accepted Mahathir's leadership joined UMNO Baru. Those who opposed him, dissatisfied with his decision of "killing" the old UMNO, joined Tengku Razaleigh's Parti Melayu Semangat 46 whose sacred aim was to defeat UMNO Baru in the general election and resurrected the old glorious UMNO that had been dissolved by the court. Unfortunately for Tengku Razaleigh and his followers the cry for old UMNO could not entice the hearts and souls of the majority of Malay voters in

the election of 1990 to give victory to Semangat 46. Knowing the might and power of Mahathir and Barisan Nasional Tengku Razaleigh teamed up with Pas, in a marriage of convenience, to oust UMNO. The result of 1990 election clearly showed that Razaleigh's fame and popularity was only in his home state of Kelantan. UMNO was completely trounced by Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (the combination of Semangat 46 and Pas) which obtained 39 state seats of none to UMNO Baru. Though Mahathir lost Kelantan to his rival yet it did not shake Mahathir to the core because his leadership was still intact, acceptable to the majority of rakyat, and Barisan Nasional still retained two-third majority in Parliament. Tengku Razaleigh, on the other hand, though relished by the sweet victory in Kelantan, yet felt frustrated because he could not win the confidence and support of the rakyat to topple Mahathir. Many of his loyal supporters were defeated in the election, and his dream of being the prime minister was dashed to smithereens. The Kelantanese prince, without giving up hope, attempted again to oust Mahathir from power in 1995 election. Again he was defeated. Again UMNO was crushed in Kelantan but managed to win seven seats to become the opposition in the State Assembly.

Pas, on the other hand, reaped harvest from the political vendetta between Tengku Razaleigh and Mahathir. Realising that the so-called Islamic party was struggling for power without much success before, therefore its leaders gladly accepted an alliance with Semangat 46 knowing pretty well Tengku Razaleigh

is a diehard UMNO loyalist. In politics one meets strange bedfellows. It is a game of the possible. Razaleigh may dream of becoming the next prime minister when Pas leaders were only contented to control Kelantan as a stepping stone for further incursions into UMNO's strongholds especially in the Malay belt states of the north. This marriage of convenience between the so-called Islamic party and Semangat 46, former UMNO leaders and members, gave a lease of life and power to Pas. As a result Pas appointed its spiritual leader (Mursyidul Am), Nik Aziz bin Nik Mat, as the menteri besar of Kelantan in 1990. As a show of gratitude and appreciation to Semangat 46, its partner, a second deputy menteri besar post was created for Razaleigh's henchman. Pas leadership really consolidated its power and left very little room and opportunity for Semangat 46 to dictate the affairs of the state since majority of the elected members were from Pas. Realizing Pas had exploited its power in Kelantan on the expense of Semangat 46 who played a second fiddle in the state government Tengku Razaleigh finally decided to dissolve Semangat 46, and came back to UMNO meekly accepting Mahathir's leadership.

The return of Tengku Razaleigh and his followers into UMNO's fold greatly enhanced the image of UMNO and Mahathir in particular. Many have predicted Tengku Razaleigh would play an important role in shaping UMNO's destiny in the future. Being a heavyweight leader of equal stature to Mahathir one would expect he be given an important ministerial

post, such as the minister of finance, by the prime minister. None came to Razaleigh's grasp, neither Razaleigh requested for any ministerial post for himself or his supporters when rejoining UMNO. This is to show that their return to UMNO is sincere for the sake of Malay unity. Many felt that Mahathir still harbours personal grudge against Razaleigh who nearly toppled him in their struggle for power in 1987. Mahathir, on the other hand, acknowledged Razaleigh's caliber as a political leader and appointed him as UMNO Liaison chief for Kelantan with the hope he would wrestle the Kelantan state government from Pas in the last general election of 1999. Under the leadership of Nik Aziz Pas government had become more powerful and influential even though the this old ulama cannot bring any physical development for the people except his regular religious sermons and, above all, his controversial blasphemous statements on Allah.

Tengku Razaleigh, though a veteran skillful leader and popular among the people, yet it was impossible for him to bring back people's support for UMNO. The mind of the Kelantanese is not with UMNO any more though he was once revered and acknowledged as a powerful and influential politician. Again UMNO lost ground winning only two state seats, with Tengku Razaleigh staggering weakly to retain Gua Musang Parlimentary seat with a slim 2,000 votes majority. The rest, including Mustapha Mohamed, Annuar Musa, Ibrahim Ali, were swept away by the power of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz and Pas. The defeat of UMNO in

Kelantan has a great impact on the political fortune of Razaleigh. Mahathir knows the Kelantan prince has lost his élan to regain Kelantan as his political base. Razaleigh too realizes he failed to deliver Kelantan back to UMNO and that affects his image as a powerful and influential leader. He was appointed as Kelantan UMNO liaison chief only four months before election. Besides that he was also made the director of election for UMNO Kelantan hoping that he would create miracles to regain the state from Pas. It was not an easy task for him to deliver Kelantan on a platter for UMNO. Squabbles among Kelantan UMNO leaders too helped to weaken the party thus contributed to a dismal show of success by UMNO. At present he is only an appointed member of UMNO Supreme Council by the president as a respect and acknowledgement of his former leadership of Semangat 46. Nothing more, nothing less.

Internal conflicts in UMNO never recede after the breakup of the party in 1987. Being the president of UMNO as well as the prime minister, Mahathir's position is the envy of many. Barrage of attacks were and are directed against him, accusing him of being a dictator, power hungry, practicing nepotism, cronyism and corruption but all these did not deter him to pursue his cherished political goal, that is, to develop Malaysia as an industrialized, modern country which will bring benefit to all rakyat irrespective of race by the year 2020. All party squabbles, be it in UMNO or any component Barisan Nasional, will be dealt with according to his own decisions. Say what you may

people respect him and look upon him with awe and full of pride because of his intellect, creative ideas, perseverance, experience, political acumen and skill that change the course of history making Malaysia and her people well-known throughout the world. He has brought dignity, a sense of national identity and pride to be called Malaysians. A leader with a mission and vision, he has tirelessly for 22 years developed the country politically and economically making Malaysia a model developing country for others to aspire. As a stubborn and hardworking prime minister he is focused towards the betterment of the country and the people rather than succumbing to the power for personal gains and fortune as practices by many powerful leaders in other countries. A non-quitter and no nonsense man, Mahathir cherishes on challenges to his power. Either from within the party or without, domestic or foreign, he will face his opponents squarely without fear. The spirit of "Malaysia Boleh" triggers courage, resilience, patience, knowledge and the freedom to surmount all odds against oneself. This is the philosophy of hope and success inculcated by Mahathir into the minds of the people.

During his 22 years of being the prime minister and UMNO president Mahathir had to face another bigger internal party problem which nearly toppled him from power. This is the issue of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, once Mahathir's protégé, successor for premiership, a confidante. Mahathir, like others, believed that Anwar, being an Islamist reformer, would be an asset to UMNO in confronting Pas. Being the

leader of ABIM, an Islamic youth movement, and a former ISA detainee at Kemunting, Anwar was considered the right choice for a minister's post in the Barisan Nasional cabinet. So in 1982 Mahathir accepted Anwar into UMNO by giving him a post as parliamentary secretary. In a short time he was promoted as an assistant minister, and within a couple of years, a full minister in the youth and sports ministry. Other UMNO leaders and political observers knew that Mahathir was favouring Anwar on the expense of other dedicated and experienced men. But none would dare to cross swords with him. Behind Mahathir's back they would voice their dislike for Anwar whom they considered a militant Islamic leader who, once upon a time, stamped his feet on UMNO's logo during one of the demonstrations against the government prior to his detention. Within a short space of a year Anwar won the leadership of UMNO Youth defeating Datuk Haji Suhaimi Kamaruddin thus making him one of the vice presidents in the UMNO Supreme Council. His mercurial rise to power in UMNO had brought about much agitations among party veterans who felt Anwar had eclipsed their future in the party. By playing to the gallery with his antics, well-planned public relations and rhetoric Anwar became a very popular hero among the youths and those smitten with Islamic flavour. Portraying himself as an Islamic reformer, a champion of anti-corruption, nepotism and cronyism, a lover of western democratic ways of life Anwar gained major support among Malay youths, UMNO members and NGOs. Overseas

he had already made a name as a radical Islamic leader during his Abim days, and becoming more prominent among Muslim presidents, who among them, had bestowed their country's highest awards in honour of Anwar's contributions to Islam!

Knowing that he was the protégé of the prime minister, Anwar started to form political networking among UMNO divisional heads, government officers, corporate figures as well as various interested groups that can generate support for him in the future. He also cultivated strong bond of Islamic relationship among the ulamas and Islamic religious teachers who would give a boost to his leadership as an Islamic leader of good standing. It was said he cultivated good relationships with most of the 165 UMNO divisional leaders who play very crucial and important roles in the election of Supreme Council members which is held once in three years. Some of his close friends in Pas had been in Abim formerly. Anwar too had some sort of mutual understanding with them with the hope that if he were to be the prime minister then there would be mutual benefits for him and Pas. I was told Mahathir knew Anwar had set various cells in the country and overseas to promote his ambition, helping him in his quest for support against his political rivals in the party. In other words, he had already made a plan for the takeover of UMNO leadership once he stepped into UMNO's shoes. He only waited for the right time to strike - the D-Day for him to topple Mahathir and be in the seat of power.

The greatest stumbling blocks for Anwar's climb

to power were Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who wielded much influence among UMNO members and divisional chiefs. These two leaders were not very happy at Anwar's rocketing position in which they considered too fast and too sudden for their liking. They also knew Mahathir was applying "divide and rule" approach to strengthen his political leadership. Anwar, the usurper for power, was never liked by a few UMNO leaders in the Supreme Council but they had to play their cards well in order to maintain their positions in the government as well in the party hierarchy. By giving much prominence to Anwar, favouring him from Razaleigh or Musa, Mahathir wanted to have check and balance in the party leadership because there were already rumours and murmurings of impending clash between Mahathir and his deputy prime minister, Musa Hitam from both camps. After Musa resigned from the government because of differences with the premier he finally joined Tengku Razaleigh for the royal battle to oust Mahathir as the president of the party in 1987. Even though both challengers lost in the fight Mahathir too was bruised and shaken after winning only a small majority of 41 votes against Razaleigh.

Without Musa and Tengku Razaleigh in UMNO leadership the field was opened for Anwar to surge forward to gain the mantle and power that he yearned for. There was no serious contender who were more popular than Musa or Tengku Razaleigh. Ghafar Baba, who replaced Musa as deputy prime minister and the deputy president of UMNO, was not considered a

serious rival to Anwar. In fact Ghafar was considered as a stopgap measure, a man in transition, as Mahathir's deputy when Musa resigned suddenly from the cabinet. Being a very experienced veteran leader in the party, and having a good rapport with other components of Barisan Nasional Ghafar was considered the best candidate to take Musa's place. Abdullah Badawi too was not thought to be a serious contender though both of them hailed from Penang. As a minister of finance Anwar had the upper hand in dealing with projects and finance which helped him to gain support in the party from divisional heads as well as corporate figures and other vested interest groups that can be capitalized and used for Anwar's advancement. It was during Anwar's term as minister of finance that many individuals, groups and vested interest parties in and out of UMNO were given "pink forms" of shares like Tenaga, Proton and Telekom given through his ministry. It was said he paddled his influence and power in UMNO by virtue of his position as minister of finance, thus making him a second most powerful man after Mahathir. It was said Anwar was a very flamboyant politician, smartly dressed with well-tailored suits costing more than RM17,000 each, coupled with handcrafted highly expensive shoes from Italy and branded silk ties to match. It was a far cry from his Abim days of cheap Malay baju, leather sandals from Masjid India and a weather-bitten second-hand Volkswagen that identified him as a firebrand, Islamic youth leader and orator. Being the keeper of finance gave Anwar the

opportunity and the power to better his political status while simultaneously building around him loyal supporters who became his cronies and gurdhas. I was told that at least two cabinet ministers who were considered Anwar's arch enemies were put in a difficult position whenever requesting for funds from the ministry of finance for their ministries.

After Musa and Tengku Razaleigh left the UMNO scene and was in the political wilderness, Anwar quickened his pace to plan the takeover of deputy presidentship of UMNO from Ghafar Baba. Though a veteran and well-known among UMNO members Ghafar was not as popular and charismatic as Anwar. Anwar's group had to move cautiously to topple Ghafar without incurring Mahathir's wrath. After the traumatic challenge to his leadership in 1987 Mahathir did not want to see another stormy political rivalries that would split UMNO again. Anwar's strategists had their plan ready which would make Ghafar surrendered meekly his position without a fight. Anwar's camp was confident that the majority of the delegates to the 1993 UMNO general assembly would vote for Anwar as the new deputy president replacing Ghafar. Those candidates who were with Anwar identified themselves the Wawasan Team. This Wawasan Team it was said had the money, the machinery and the gurdhas to woo most delegates to their political cause.

I was told that Mahathir did not favour the change of the guard as his deputy. He wanted a status quo as a respect for the veteran Ghafar. Anwar too, on many

occasions, echoed the president's wish, and he too made statements denying that he would go against Ghafar. Ghafar, basking in the glory as a veteran leader and knowing that Anwar was not going after his seat, became complacent hoping that he would definitely retain the deputy's post after the general assembly. There was little campaign on Ghafar's part because he was given the assurance that no one is going to challenge him. Unknown to Mahathir and Ghafar, Anwar's men had already influenced not less than 90 divisions out of 165 that wanted Anwar to be the candidate for deputy president's post in their resolutions sent to UMNO headquarters. Of 165 divisions about 12 divisions chose Ghafar to retain his position. The resolutions made by various UMNO divisions regarding the choice of candidates for the president and deputy president's posts had great bearings on the fate of the candidates chosen by them. After the split in UMNO of Mahathir-Ghafar vs Tengku Razaleigh-Musa fight in 1987 there was an amendment in the party constitution which gave 10 bonus votes to any candidate who were nominated by the divisions for the president and deputy president prior to the general assembly meeting where the delegates, around 2000 in number, would cast their votes for the election of office bearers of the Supreme Council of 35 member team. Since Anwar obtained nominations for deputy president's post from more than 90 divisions therefore Ghafar had no chance of retaining the coveted position any more. He only managed to get nominations from 12 divisions which

clearly indicated he had to give way to Anwar without any further delay. By obtaining a few nominations Ghafar had no chance of getting majority votes from the delegates - the majority of whom came from the divisions that nominated Anwar for the post. In order to protect himself from Mahathir's displeasure for going against the boss's directive not to challenge Ghafar, Anwar it was said informed the boss that he could not deny the wish of the majority of the divisions that supported him to go against Ghafar..Of course Mahathir knew Anwar only gave lip service for not wanting to challenge Ghafar. He had already planned to fight Ghafar, and with the money and good networking he had within UMNO, the old veteran had no alternative except to admit defeat before the battle. Mahathir, on the other hand, had no alternative but to accept the wishes of the majority. Thus Anwar became the deputy president and with it the coveted post of deputy prime minister -another step towards premiership and the president's post!

The result of money politics became more glaring during the 1993 UMNO general assembly where most aspiring candidates resorted to buying votes from 2,000 odd delegates.The three vice presidential candidates under the bandwagon of "Wawasan Team", a pro Anuar group, won the day. They were Najib Tun Razak, Muhammad bin Muhamad Taib and Muhyiddin Yassin. Abdullah Badawi, one of the incumbents but was not in the team, lost the post. It can be deduced that majority of the Supreme Council elected in 1993 were aligned to Anwar leaving

Mahathir with a few loyal members for the moment. With Ghafar ousted and sidelined in the party hierarchy, Anwar and his cronies were marking time before embarking on a plan to wrestle the presidency, and with it the premiership of the country. In order to impress Mahathir of his undivided loyalty and reverence for the boss, Anwar often made statements to that effect on numerous occasions so as to convince the prime minister that he had a faithful deputy to help him in his political distress.

Was Mahathir convinced of Anwar's loyalty to him after Ghafar was mauled and ousted by the man he chose to be an ally in UMNO? Could Mahathir believe in him after Anwar defied his instruction and plotted for the overthrow of Ghafar? Or did Mahathir indirectly give his blessing for Anwar to oust Ghafar who had served as a "caretaker" deputy prime minister? Those who know Mahathir closely said he would never betray a friend like Ghafar for his political vested interest in order to give a place for Anwar. Mahathir too was taken aback when knowing majority of the UMNO divisions voted for Anwar instead of Ghafar. The downfall of Ghafar, treacherously done, made Mahathir to reappraise his protégé. He knew after Ghafar he would be the next political victim. He knew he could not trust Anwar anymore. Mahathir once said, in his presidential speech for the UMNO general assembly, that there was Brutus in their midst. Though no name was mentioned but the delegates knew whom Mahatahir was referring to.

But Mahathir was determined to fight tooth and

nail against anybody who tried to topple him as shown in the battle royal of 1987 between him and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. No doubt about it Anwar had the best, dedicated and loyal followers who peddle his influence all over the country especially among UMNO members and leaders. No one, including Mahathir, had such a network to galvanize support for his own political ends among party members. UMNO is a powerful political party and its leadership is acknowledged by all and sundry as the leader of the country. Every one accepts the fact that UMNO is the most senior party, the oldest and the ruling Malay party that has the majority support in the country. It shares political power with MCA and MIC and other component parties in Barisan Nasional. The rakyat support UMNO since independence to rule the country with their mandate without fail. Even the non Malays too trust UMNO and support it to manage the running of the government. The power of UMNO is the power of the country, the power bestowed by the multiracial people of Malaysia. UMNO, though a Malay bumiputra party, is considered a political party that protects all rakyat, irrespective of their race, religion, culture and way of life. This is the secret success of UMNO that becomes the envy of envies many in the component parties of Barisan Nasional as well as among the oppositions.

Therefore any one who becomes the president of UMNO will be the leader of the government, the prime minister of all he surveys. The road to power is through UMNO and nothing else. If Anwar were to be absorbed

by Pas he would be only an opposition leader, lauded and praised by many but could not be accepted by the multiracial society to lead the country. When offered to join UMNO and later appointed as a full minister Anwar knew the road to the seat of power was within his grasp. He knew Mahathir needed him badly to counter Pas's accusations of UMNO being a secular Malay party and not Islamic as understood and interpreted by Pas leaders. Mahathir, like others, also believed that Anwar was an Islamic reformist, a genuine upholder of Islamic values and ways of life. With Anwar beside him it was hoped Pas would not make any wild accusations regarding the hollowness of UMNO as an Islamic party since Anwar had good rapport with some of the top leaders of PAS. Being a cunning and skilful leader Anwar too realized Mahathir wanted to make use of his presence to prop up support for his own political ends. In fact both knew each other's needs, and both played their cards according to their personal goals and agendas.

Being a protégé of Mahathir, with the support given by the prime minister, gave Anwar an upper hand and the privilege that none could dream of. Many feared to cross swords with Anwar for fear of losing their ministerial or other positions that have given them good lives beyond the dreams of poor peasants and fishermen. Others like Sanusi Jones and Abdullah Badawi, known as adversaries of Anwar, had to play second fiddles in the cabinet and the party. They had to hide their frustrations as much as possible and clung tenaciously to Mahathir. When Ghafar was deputy

prime minister his political secretary was Kamaruddin Jaafar (now Pas MP for Tumpat), a staunch Anwar disciple since their Abim days. In every ministry, semi government body, in the corporate sector, police and armed forces, Islamic groups and other religious institutions and in student movements there would be Anwar's men and women who helped to promote him as an Islamic leader who would lead the country in the near future. Mahathir himself did not have such networking of contacts like Anwar. Anwar had his own personal agenda which must be fulfilled as fast as he could before Mahathir realized that he was after his seat of power. He must have his tentacles in all political and nonpolitical institutions before confronting Mahathir for a showdown to wrestle the premiership from him. It was a risky and dangerous task for him to go against the most powerful man in the land. He knew the risk involved but he had no alternative except to take over the leadership of the party and the government fast. He was fighting against time. He feared his scandal, as a homosexual would be exposed before he could achieve his life long dream of being the prime minister of the country. It was said if Anwar was successful in overthrowing Mahathir, then, his homosexual activities would be under wrap and no one would dare to drag him to court for it.

Mahathir must have recollected the road show done by Anwar to galvanize support for him in going against Ghafar for the deputy president's post. Thousands of UMNO supporters, including a number of menteri besar and ministers, came to Penang to pay

homage and to show loyalty and support for Anwar. Like a peacock Anwar was brimming with pride to see many familiar faces among the party stalwarts who greeted him and idolised him. They too wanted to be identified with the potential winner, a future prime minister. As politicians they were very practical, adjusting their loyalties and ties according to the winds of change of the time. There were no permanent foes, neither permanent friends. Make hay while the sun shines. Not only most of the Supreme Council members were Anwar's men but also most of the 165 divisional heads of UMNO were on his side. If there was another battle royal between Mahathir and Anwar for the president's post many speculated that Mahathir would lose the presidency if he was complacent and if he left everything to fate.

After Penang, Anwar's road show came to Kuala Lumpur and a few more states thus bringing more support to him and fear for the incumbent. Ghafar, on his side, did not campaign seriously. The tide was against him. It was already written on the wall that he would lose the fight. It was Anwar's day, and no one would deny it.

Mahathir too must have realized that Anwar was very ambitious. He stopped at nothing to achieve his dreams, his goals in life. Being a charismatic politician of caliber, a great orator who could mesmerize his audience, an actor wearing a number of masks to suit the political spectators of the gallery, Anwar was no match to that of Abdullah Badawi or Sanusi Joned or any other leader except Mahathir, Musa Hitam,

Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Rais Yatim and Rafidah Aziz. There was mutual respect between the two because Anwar owed gratitude to Mahathir who welcomed him into the party and gave him the opportunity and support. Without Mahathir's endorsement and support Anwar would not have reached the level of a cabinet minister. Unfortunately the relationship soured and strained when Anwar plotted to overthrow Mahathir by causing dissensions and conflicts among various leaders in the party. It was said while parroting his loyalty and paying homage to Mahathir, he and his henchmen were covertly undermining Mahathir's leadership after he successfully overthrew Ghafar in the 1993 UMNO election.

On many occasions Mahathir had made statements that Anwar would take his place once he decided to retire from politics, a hint to other ambitious leaders in UMNO to toe the line and accept Anwar as his successor for the sake of party unity. Though Mahathir had confidence and trust in his protégé yet at the back of his mind he was disturbed by the way Anwar maneuvered and toppled Ghafar even though he had already promised his boss that he wouldn't go against the veteran leader.

This time Ghafar was the victim of Anwar's plot. Would Anwar hatch similar plot of greater magnitude to topple him? After becoming deputy prime minister coupled with his finance portfolio Anwar's tentacles and political influence had reached far and wide. He paddled his influence through his ministry of finance

where multimillion ringgit projects were given to his cronies and relatives making most of them instant millionaires. Besides offering "pink forms", shares allotted to bumiputra individuals and companies registered with the finance ministry, to promote his cause, and as a sign of his "benevolence", he was also said to be responsible in giving multimillion ringgit projects to various groups, including his friends and cronies, through negotiated tenders. With all the guiles and maneuvering to push himself as the "rightful" leader to succeed Mahathir for the premiership, Mahathir, on his part, seemed to be more restrained in his comment about Anwar though he did warn leaders that they should not be too aggressive and impatient in their pursuit for power.

It was Mahathir's cherished aim of making Anwar his successor, and only time would decide. He only hoped Anwar would be more patient, gain more experience in the management of the country and the people before passing the baton of authority to him. UMNO members and the general public knew Anwar would succeed Mahathir. Though a few leaders were disappointed and disenchanted with Mahathir's choice but no one tried to destabilize the party and created factions to challenge Mahathir's choice..

Unfortunately, after ousting Ghafar from the political limelight Anwar's cronies and henchmen tried to go further by plotting to topple Mahathir so as to make Anwar the prime minister. There were common views among political leaders, in and out of UMNO, that Mahathir would stay put in his position until death.

As a man of vision Mahathir would like to see the implementation of Vision 2020 moves as planned. According to him, his fight for the good of the country and the rakyat "is not ended yet". In Anwar's camp restlessness and anxieties ruled the day because they strongly believed Mahathir would not relinquish his premiership in the near future. He would die in office, and Anwar would only be a "waiting maid" at the corridor of power. Intoxicated with victory, instant wealth obtained by his relatives and cronies, his advisors and plotters made a go against Mahathir. All preparations had been made to get undivided support among 165 divisional heads, Youth and Wanita wings. The D-Day for Mahathir's downfall had been set. The clock ticked on. The political heat was felt by all and sundry.

While his gurkhas and loyal plotters spread the news of impending challenge against Mahathir, Anwar, on his part, harped on his loyalty and gratitude towards Mahathir in various speeches for party and public consumption in order to lull the prime minister away from the undercurrent of dissent ignited by him. Unfortunately, Anwar misjudged Mahathir. Mahathir was no fool. He received various confidential reports from UMNO supporters as well as Special Branch and other intelligence agencies of his deputy's plot to oust him. Naturally Mahathir was disappointed to know his protégé acted like Brutus, trying to grab power without considering the effect on the political stability of the country and the good image of UMNO. Taking stock of the seriousness of Anwar's plot, Mahathir

began to chart his plan to face his adversary head on.

Mahathir, too, realized Anwar had been building his political network inside and outside Malaysia during his period in the cabinet. His good rapport with Arab and Islamic countries were already cemented during his Abim days and became more prominent when he was elected cabinet minister. While in the cabinet he also had strong friendly ties with Washington and Congress members as well as government leaders of Canada, Britain and other European countries, Australia and New Zealand. Besides European and American connections he also had ardent admirers among the Indonesian, Thai, Japanese, the Philippine politicians. In other words, Anwar had already prepared to take over the country by having various national and international networks in order to strengthen his political base. It was said he even hired former CIA officials to be his think tank in Washington helping him to boost his popularity and contacts with powerful people at the White House and the Capitol Hill. In the country he had a think tank ran by his loyal and trusted buddy, Datuk Kamaruddin Jaafar, named Institut Kajian Dasar (Institute of Basic Policy) which organized various forums and talks that highlighted Anwar's political philosophy. This institute also published a number of books and pamphlets reflecting policies and idealism of its mentor. There was a book supposed to be written by Anwar named *The Asian Renaissance* and translated and edited by one Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka officer into Bahasa Melayu which highlighted his thoughts

about Islam, democracy and universal justice. The local press too was under the control of Anwar who appointed his cronies in the Straits Time Group as well as in the Utusan Melayu Group. TV3, being a subsidiary of MRCB, controlled by Anwar's men, always gave good coverage on his activities. The plan to topple Mahathir was meticulous and serious.

A few of Mahathir's ardent and loyal supporters, who were ministers at that time, warned the prime minister of Anwar's plot. Instead of listening and giving some thoughts about it, Mahathir brushed them aside and scolded them for bringing such tidings of his protégé. I was told one of them was chased out of Mahathir's office when he brought Anwar's "evil intentions" to him. It seemed he was not convinced of Anwar's plot for he really believed his deputy would not be too impatient to wait for his time as future prime minister. Many a time he had told the general public that Anwar would be his successor, and that should have been an assurance for him to wait for his turn. But Anwar was restless so also were his cronies and political opportunists who clung to him.

In order to contain Anwar's obsession for the premiership and to ensure political stability in UMNO it was decided that the general election be held earlier than the election of UMNO Supreme Council members, which is held once in three years. UMNO candidates were carefully selected and endorsed by Mahathir so as to be sure that majority of them were not Anwar's supporters. The menteri besars, a few of them were Anwar's cronies, tried to keep their distance

from Anwar and aligned to Mahathir for fear of losing their power and jobs. There were some parasitic menteri besars and ministers who were promised something of substance by Anwar who finally turned against him when he did not keep his promises to them. Being president of UMNO and prime minister Mahathir could easily turn the table against his opponent because they knew all the power of hiring and firing were and are with Mahathir.

Anwar realized Mahathir had smelt plot against him, and the relationship between the two were cordial but strained according to inner sources. There was no turning back for the fight for the leadership had began, and everything was meticulously planned and executed in order to make Anwar the prime minister. No more waiting in the wing for Mahathir to vacate peacefully and voluntarily from the seat of power. He must be ousted fast without mercy or regret. The time was ripe, the support from within UMNO and outside were ready to be used and activated. His cronies and loyal disciples were convinced the battle against Mahathir would be a waterloo for the former doctor. If Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh were no match for Mahathir then, with Anwar, the history of defeat would be on Mahathir's side. Only Allah would decide whether he would be victorious or be defeated with ignominy. Another battle royal was in the making.

## *Chapter Three*

# THE ODDS AGAINST ANWAR

One cannot deny filial loyalty of Malays for their beloved leader whether a sultan in ancient time or present day UMNO president. The cardinal importance of power in leadership will determine the course of history for the people. Power determines loyalty and respect and the Malays respect the leader who wields his power judiciously for the benefit of the rakyat. According to *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals) there was a tacit oath between Demang Lebar Daun, the leader of the common men, and Raja Sang Sapurba, the ruler, regarding homage and loyalty. According to the legend Demang Lebar Daun told the prince that his people would respect and give filial

loyalty to him and his successors as long as you and your successors practice justice and fairness to us. But if you or your successors were cruel and unjust in your rule then my people would go against you and your successors. Such were the unwritten understanding and promise made between the ruler and the rakyat which becomes part of the Malay tradition of loyalty and respect for the one in power.

In UMNO such loyalty and respect for the president is greatly acknowledged. Even though Tengku Abdul Rahman's rule was blackened by racial riot of 13 May 1969 no one challenged him openly for the president's post. Mahathir was an exponent who defied Tengku and wrote a letter to the premier asking him to resign, yet he dared not challenge Tengku for the presidency. Instead Tun Abdul Razak, deputy prime minister and deputy president of UMNO, took over the leadership of the party and government when Tengku voluntarily resigned and took the post as secretary general of the OIC at Jeddah. When Tun Razak came to power Datuk Harun Idris, former menteri besar of Selangor, who was then UMNO Youth leader, challenged Razak for presidency. Though Harun was considered a popular leader, charismatic, a good speaker, yet he could not unseat Razak. He lost.

Again Harun Idris tried to challenge Tun Hussein Onn, who became the premier after Razak's untimely death in London, but it was a lost cause. Harun was found guilty of corruption and jailed for four years. After Mahathir came to power in 1981 Harun obtained

a royal pardon and was released from Pudu Jail. After coming out from the jail Harun never made a come back into politics again. He became a forgotten man, a dot in the history of UMNO politics.

But the greatest challenge to power was the mega fight between Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Musa Hitam against Mahathir and Ghafar Baba in 1987. The first time in the history of UMNO a giant confrontation against the leadership that led to the dissolution of the party by the High Court, which split UMNO into two antagonistic camps. Being cornered and besieged Mahathir determined to hold on to power by establishing UMNO Baru (New UMNO). Since UMNO members are mostly Malays therefore they followed Mahathir's leadership, and left Tengku Razaleigh and other loyal followers to form Parti Melayu Semangat 46. The Kelantanese prince had a political party but was in the opposition without power to retain everlasting loyalty to him. Thousands of his followers, after two failed attempts to fight against UMNO in 1990 and 1995 elections, exhausted and despondent after futile struggles, opted back to UMNO. Finally Tengku Razaleigh, after spending millions of ringgit but failed to dislodge Mahathir from power, dissolved Semangat 46 and returned to UMNO. According to Razaleigh most of the Semangat 46 members were from Old UMNO which was dissolved but were barred from joining the New UMNO because of their differences with Mahathir. When dissolving Semangat 46 and rejoining UMNO, Razaleigh and his followers never considered themselves as interlopers or new

members of UMNO even though the present UMNO was initiated and given life by Mahathir. Thus they considered themselves at par with other UMNO members and leaders of UMNO Baru and had the same rights and opportunities like other UMNO Baru members.

Being the party in power, a Malay leader of great caliber and vision, skilled and experienced in political strategy and maneuvering, Mahathir stands high and mighty above the rest. No Malay leader of his stature ever braved enough to face the challenges of the West, expounding his radical ideas of new consciousness and political dimensions in uniting and bridging the gaps among developing nations of the world whether in politics, economy, trade and cultural pursuits in order to safeguard their independence from the clutches of new imperialism and neo-colonialism of the West. It was Mahathir who propagated the ideas of enriching one's neighbours in order to give mutual benefits in trade and industries. Trading between developing nations should benefit all partners rather than exploiting other nations' resources for the benefit of more progressive developing countries. A man of action, dedicated in his goal to win respect, honour and pride to all Malaysians, especially the Malays, Mahathir never shirks his moral duty to perform the best for the country and the rakyat. The impact of his leadership is greatly felt and acknowledged by all. Such respect and influence bring awe, support and loyalty to him as well as fear to those who attempts to challenge and topple him.

But Anwar thought otherwise. If he were able to topple Ghafar, a veteran UMNO leader, then the same networking he built and nurtured in UMNO could have crippled Mahathir too. Likewise Anwar could shout to the world with pride and arrogance that by democratic means he was successful in dethroning Mahathir from the seat of power, that is, by 165 UMNO divisional representatives at the general meeting for the selection of UMNO Supreme Council in 1996. He was confident that the majority of 165 divisional heads would come to his side and, with 10 bonus votes for each nomination by the division, Anwar's henchmen were optimistic that Mahathir could face the same fate as Ghafar. Since most of the divisional heads had been compromised by money, pink forms of shares and other lucrative material attractions, therefore Anwar was assured of victory. He knew the stakes were high and dangerous if he failed in his attempt to unseat Mahathir. The past episode of the mega fight between Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh was still fresh in everyone's mind. There would be no compromise on both sides. Winner took all. The loser would lick his wound, out of politics or cast into political wilderness, or rise again from the ashes of defeat to challenge the incumbent in future.

Mahathir's loyal lieutenants believed Anwar would wipe out all traces of Mahathir's success as well as his loyal supporters in the party and the government. He would replace all Mahathir's men and women with his loyalists and henchmen in order to strengthen his

political base and control over the party and the government machinery. He knew Mahathir did not have such well-organized plan and grass root support among UMNO branches and divisions. His strength lies in the power he holds and the great caliber and intellectual visions of his personality which transforms the destiny of the Malaysian society and turns Malaysia into a progressive, dynamic nation. Being a deputy prime minister and deputy to Mahathir in UMNO hierarchy, Anwar had to trudge cautiously in plotting his way to the top. A wrong move would spell disaster and the end of his political career. No other Malay based party could catapult him to power and the leadership like UMNO. Though at one time, he was swayed into attacking UMNO on Pas's platform yet, looking at the attractive offer given him by Mahathir, he decided to join UMNO which gave him the mercurial rise to power. Furthermore, Pas's orthodox ulamas and fanaticism inherent in the party did not agree well with his liberal attitude of freedom, justice and his love for western mores. Above all he was considered a protégé of Mahathir, owed a lot to him, therefore had to try his level best to keep his cool and behave warmly towards Mahathir as if there was no bad blood between them, pretending that he was a loyal deputy to the big boss.

As stated earlier, Mahathir while serenading his deputy would be his eventual successor clipped Anwar's wing and power by selecting candidates who were pro himself to contest in the 1995 election. That action made Anwar to take stock of his political

predicament and to readjust his strategies in order to consolidate his position in the party. Like a shrewd chess player he had to make calculated moves so as not to be check-mated by Mahathir which would threaten his political future. With Mahathir playing a major role in selecting candidates for the election a number of Anwar's cronies and supporters were frustrated and disappointed; his promises unfulfilled, his image as a responsible leader and future prime minister doubted and tarnished. The Malays have a saying *dalam kilat ada kilau*, that is, in the lightening there is a flash which in this case meant that Mahathir had already known the hidden agenda of his deputy! Like a seasoned and experienced politician he did not confront Anwar head on, but was watching and monitoring his every move without intruding into Anwar's political game. Though Anwar had his agenda to topple Mahathir through democratic means, that is, election of Supreme Council members, yet Mahathir kept his cool and was still harping that Anwar would be his successor when the right time came for him to leave the centre stage. Such open-heartedness left Anwar out of his wit, listless and restless for not knowing when he would be given the privilege and honour to be the number one boss of the government and the party.

Indirectly Mahathir wanted to sink into Anwar's mind that his plot to topple him was already discovered. And that he was aware and was taking stock of Anwar's intended goal. The hidden battle had begun. The D-Day was near. The clock ticked on.

The election results of 1995 clearly showed Barisan Nasional won with more than two-third majority in Parliament. The support given to the ruling party was never denied by the multiracial society in the country. With that victory Mahathir was once again leading the government, 14 years as prime minister. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who was leading Semangat 46, could not make much headway. Mahathir was too powerful and too influential to be toppled. Semangat 46 and Pas could still retain Kelantan, a poor and backward Malay majority state and nothing more. Looking at the state of dejection and frustration among his followers after two fights in two general elections, finally Tengku Razaleigh and his ex UMNO men rejoined UMNO. They realized the rakyat will only support and accept UMNO as the protector and saviour of the Malays, Islam and the nation. Being nationalists, the heritage of UMNO idealism, Tengku Razaleigh, being a man of honour and dignity, and without soliciting for ministerial post either for himself or his staunch supporters returned to UMNO. He requested Mahathir to accept all ex Semangat 46 members without conditions, and let them play an active part in strengthening the Malay unity. Anwar, on his part, was not very pleased with the influx of ex Semangat 46 men and women back into UMNO.

Most of all he did not want Tengku Razaleigh to be in the mainstream of UMNO politics once again, which could dampen or block his road to the top. From another source it was said Mahathir was happy with the home coming of Tengku Razaleigh during the

"thaw" between himself and his deputy. Being a seasoned politician with long experiences in UMNO, Tengku Razaleigh's men were not well-received by some UMNO branches and divisions for feared as they losing their leadership at branch and division level to former Semangat 46 men. It seemed there was a deliberate move by certain top leaders at the UMNO Supreme Council as well as at the party headquarters to reject memberships from ex Semangat 46 men. They feared that Tengku Razaleigh would pose a challenge to Anwar in his pursuit for power if Mahathir were to leave the stage on his own accord. Knowing that Tengku Razaleigh had strong support in UMNO, a former cabinet minister of finance, Anwar felt his plan would be dashed if Tengku Razaleigh became active again in UMNO. With Tengku Razaleigh in UMNO, Mahathir's position would be stronger and un-challenged because he had given a lease of political life to the Kelantanese prince to play an important role in the party again. Though without giving a ministerial post to him, Mahathir, as a sign of respect and friendship, appointed him as a member of UMNO Supreme Council as well as head of UMNO State Liaison Committee of Kelantan to oversee the administration of the party and plan strategies to recapture Kelantan from Pas. With Tengku Razaleigh as an appointed member of the UMNO Supreme Council Anwar was hot in his pants knowing pretty well that he had an ambitious rival breathing on his neck. Mahathir had the last laugh looking at the two adversaries contemplating their separate moves to

outwit and outgun one another in their struggle for power. As a matter of fact Tengku Razaleigh did not make any political move that would put Mahathir or Anwar in trouble spot. He was only interested to bring Malay unity in UMNO and make it the most powerful and respected party in the country. Unfortunately for Anwar he made wrong political interpretation of Razaleigh's rejoining UMNO. He was under the impression that Mahathir and Razaleigh had a hidden agenda to oust him from the party and the government. Being suspicious of other leaders who were not in his camp Anwar became more jittery when Tengku Razaleigh was made an appointed member of UMNO Supreme Council. If Tengku Razaleigh were to join forces with Mahathir to block his way to the top, then he would be left out and most likely sacked from the cabinet or expelled from the party.

Looking at the experience and political maturity of the two, Tengku Razaleigh is far above Anwar in political stature. By contesting the presidency of UMNO in 1987 against Mahathir and losing by the whiskers, only 41 votes, clearly showed Razaleigh is a prime minister's material. Though failed to win considerable parliamentary seats during 1990 and 1995 general elections for Semangat 46, he himself never lost his Gua Musang parliamentary seat until today. Anwar, on the other hand, has the gift of the gap which he skillfully utilized and nurtured to sway and mesmerize his audience to his cause. Besides he portrayed himself as an Islamic leader, virtuous from all the ills of corruption, womanizing, gambling,

drinking and, presented himself as a deeply religious man!

He even became the imam during prayers, and at certain times, reading sermons on the pulpit during Friday congregations. Even though Tengku Razaleigh is not a great orator like Anwar or does not portray himself as an Islamic leader yet Anwar feared this man from Kelantan who indirectly had persuaded him to join UMNO in 1982. If both were to contest for the top post in the party after Mahathir has left the political scene it would be a very intense and close fight that would go either way. In other words, it would not be easy for Anwar to grab the presidency if Tengku Razaleigh were to participate in the fight for the top job.

Many people were surprised and dumbfounded why Anwar wanted to go against Mahathir when the whole nation knew he would be the next successor? Was he doubtful of his big boss's sincerity in anointing him as the next in line? Was there something disturbing his mind that triggered him not to wait for Mahathir's resignation but to plunge head on confronting Mahathir? Mahathir is known as a man with great integrity and sincerity in his deals with others. Some considered him too soft and full of compassion when dealing with certain leaders who were considered "haves been" in politics, as Mahathir obliged to their requests for positions. One of the "has been" politicians is Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, former menteri besar of Terengganu. Before 1999 election it was said Mahathir had received numerous political reports

advising him not to reappoint Wan Mokhtar to contest in the election. UMNO would lose if he was selected to be a candidate once again. After knowing his name was not included in the list of candidates Wan Mokhtar came to Putrajaya pleading and sobbing requesting for his last term in office. Mahathir, when faced with much pleading and tears from a veteran UMNO leader, turned soft and agreed to reinstate Wan Mokhtar for his last chance. As predicted by many political pundits and observers the presence of Wan Mokhtar and his cronies gave a big blow to UMNO which was crushed and ousted from power by the opposition party – Pas, leaving four UMNO stalwarts as opposition members in the Terengganu State Assembly today.

Anwar, realizing the stake for the top post was becoming more crucial as days passed by, could not wait patiently any more for fear of losing the golden opportunity to strike when the iron was hot. After the intoxicating success of defeating Ghafar Baba it was time to challenge the big boss himself. He was definitely sure that the majority of UMNO leaders would be on his side and endorse his fight for the presidency. There was no mistake about it. His henchmen and cronies were of the opinion that Anwar must challenge Mahathir, believing the big boss would never give up easily and would die at his post. Anwar too was optimistic that victory was on his side since he had already established good relationships especially with the Clinton administration and other western leaders whom he admired and cherished, and who would give him support in time of need. The

time was ripe for the grand kill. He had already gathered the forces, inside UMNO and overseas, to help him achieve his dream. As the clock ticked away Anwar's excitement and impatience for the D-day became clearly seen. The American press and media as well as the Clinton administration occasionally intruded into the internal affairs of our country with statements that were considered anti Mahathir and pro Anwar. If Anwar were successful in overthrowing Mahathir from the pinnacle of his power then it was perceived Anwar was in tune with the rhythm of Washington's political goal, an Islamic friend cum crony who was much admired and treasured by Washington and other western friends of his.. At the UMNO level most of the divisional heads had been compromised with money, pink forms, projects, positions in the government, directorships in various semi-government agencies and promotions in a new government to be formed by him when replacing Mahathir after the UMNO general meeting of 1996. He had three- pronged attacks against Mahathir's bastion. Firstly, hr galvanised support from most of UMNO divisional heads and the two thousand odd delegates for the party's general meeting in 1996 in the plott to overthrow Mahathir. Secondly, the help given by Clinton administration in putting pressure on the prime minister, and thirdly, the moral support given by the western media such as CNN, CNBC, Time, Newsweek, Far Eastern Economic Review, Asiaweek and others for Anwar in his struggle to oust Mahathir.

Mahathir was no fool. He knew Anwar only gave lip service to him, pretending to support him while at the same time instructing his supporters to undermine his leadership by wooing most of the divisional heads to be on his side. What Anwar did to Ghafar was similarly repeated. If most of the divisional leaders sided with Anwar nominating him for the top party post, then Mahathir's influence would be eroded, and Anwar would be in a stronger and firmer position to challenge him for the leadership. Of course Mahathir too obtained information from various sources of Anwar's intention to battle his way for the top job. He knew Washington was intruding into Malaysian politics when Al Gore, the vice president, bluntly and rudely called upon Malaysians to support "reformasi" when he attended the APEC meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Even the American ambassador, Mr Mallot, supported Anwar blatantly ignoring diplomatic finesse and good relationship with the Malaysian government. There were some European leaders, as well as Canadian and Australian who openly supported Anwar in their statements. Malaysian neighbours, namely Amin Rais of Indonesia and former actor cum president of the Phillipines, Joseph Estrada, who is now fighting for his life in detention for corruption and abuse of power, also parroted their support for Anwar. The stage was set for a confrontation to do or die against Mahathir. Anwar was excited but fear too gripped him. Any wrong move on his part would invite disaster. But his cronies and advisers, intoxicated with power and the fortune to go with it, spurred Anwar to plunge head-

long facing Mahathir squarely. No more waiting at the corridor of power. The time had come for him to move forward, to take the rein of the party and the government from Mahathir in a show of force. The battle plan was already prepared for Anwar's success and Mahathir's doom. No more oscillating in doubt. To be or not to be, that was the critical question that must be answered by Anwar. He must pluck courage, feel confident, and be ignited by the support of the majority of divisional heads, he must step forward to face the all-powerful Mahathir.

In spite of all the predicament confronting him, Mahathir still delegated his power to Anwar as acting prime minister during his two months vacation overseas. He was in various countries in Europe, while at the same time, contemplating other political moves to deflect and checkmate his deputy's plot to oust him from the party and the government. By giving his deputy the opportunity to take control of the government during his absence, Mahathir skillfully lured Anwar into the trap. Now he wanted to see whether Anwar would abuse his position as acting prime minister for his own benefit or not. He wanted to find out what political moves and designs made by Anwar to strengthen his political positions at the expense of his goodwill and trust. Under the guise of holidays in Europe for a two months stint Mahathir, like an experienced and seasoned hunter, laid a trap for the unsuspected, overzealous deputy who was too obsessed with power.

Though on vacation Mahathir received various

reports on the country and Anwar's abuse of power. It was said he made a lot of changes and maneuvers by putting his cronies and hangers-on in various government agencies as well as in UMNO in order to have a greater grip on the party as well as the government. Also it was said he gave a number of multimillion ringgit projects to his cronies so as to give his group strong financial backing, and ample fund to generate for his political cause. Datuk Murad, a former director of Bank Negara, in his statutory declaration, mentioned that Anwar had 20 master accounts worth about RM3,000 million which were handled by various trusted cronies for his political use. All in all, he was already prepared for a showdown.

Realizing the dangerous moves made by Anwar to cripple his leadership Mahathir, on his part, was also prepared for the showdown when knowing Anwar's treachery against him. Mahathir's staunch supporters had informed him of Anwar's bag of tricks to marginalise him. Mahathir, as always, did not believe at first. He trusted Anwar very much and wanted to groom him as his eventual successor. He also knew some of his close aids did not meet eye to eye with Anwar. Some had an axe to grind against Anwar when they failed to obtain certain projects or positions through him. Others did not like the way Anwar manipulated people for his own personal benefit. Many believed Anwar was a political opportunist who stoop at nothing to achieve his ambition of being the leader of UMNO and the government.

Other UMNO leaders wanted a firm and drastic action by the president to oust Anwar from the party's leadership and government. Many argued that the former Abim leader was a traitor to the party's cause and a thorn in the flesh for Mahathir. But Mahathir kept his cool without giving an indication of his animosity against his deputy. Realizing that Mahathir had already known his plot Anwar tried desperately to win Mahathir's confidence by lobbying members of UMNO Supreme Council to make a resolution whereby the posts of the president and deputy president should not be contested. The resolution was passed without blinking an eye. Thus refraining any rumour of rift between the two leaders.

Some political observers were of the opinion Mahathir was afraid of Anwar's challenge to his leadership thus he influenced the Supreme Council to deny contest for the two top posts in the party. Thus he and Anwar retained their positions easily, avoiding any split in the UMNO leadership. But the political scenario of the time was more orchestrated by Anwar and his goons who were too confident of victory over Mahathir. There were talks of offering cabinet posts to certain leaders, a few were promised to be appointed as menteri besar, others as exco members at state level. There were others who were promised big multimillion ringgit projects as a sign of appreciation for their contribution towards Anwar's pursuit to power.

The Youth and Women's wing of UMNO at that time were headed by leaders who were alingned to

Anwar. The Youth wing especially was vociferous in its attack against cronyism, nepotism and corruption allegedly practised by Mahathir without realizing that Anwar, their mentor and "godfather", was practising and condoning such vices which they leveled at their own president. This is a case of pots calling the kettle black. Such virulent attack on Mahathir's leadership at the general meeting of UMNO, the year of election of new office bearers for the Supreme Council in 1996, was deliberately orchestrated by the Youth leader at the instigation of Anwar so as to embarrass Mahathir in public. Mahathir, on his part, did not show agitation or anger by rebutting all the accusations made. Instead lists of people who were given projects were pasted on the notice board during the UMNO meeting so that delegates and observers too could peruse them and find out the names of those involved. Most of the names who were given various projects were Anwar's men and supporters! At that historic meeting I was told by a source in the UMNO Youth wing that a number of American secret agents were in Kuala Lumpur and at PWTC to monitor the development of the day. It was rumoured that a vote of no confidence against Mahathir would be introduced, the prime minister would be ousted, and Anwar Ibrahim would be declared the new sixth prime minister instead.

Anwar, basking in the glory of self adulation by his cronies and hangers-on, did not realize something was brewing up to change the course of history that brought political downfall for him. While UMNO Youth leader attacked Mahathir's leadership, Anwar,

like a well-seasoned actor, pretended to be the champion of his mentor, Mahathir, harped on the same old, stale tune of Mahathir as his mentor, father cum leader, from whom he derived gems of thought, creative and innovative ideas and political experiences that made him what he was at that historic time. He was brimming with praise and adulation for the man who moulded and groomed him to be second most powerful man in the country. Empty rhetorics, full of flatterings but all these never stirred Mahathir to succumb to Anwar's exuberance.

Man proposes but Allah disposes. Unknown to him and his loyal followers the delegates to the general assembly were greatly shocked beyond belief by the exposure in the book written by Khalid Jaffri, a writer and former journalist of Utusan Melayu. The name of that historic book that changed Anwar's political destiny is *50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Ibrahim Tidak Boleh Menjadi PM ( 50 Reasons Why Anwar Ibrahim Cannot Become PM )*. All the delegates to the meeting, including UMNO Supreme Council members, received one complimentary copy of the book in each complimentary meeting bag given by UMNO headquarters!

Anwar read the book, he was shocked, restless and fuming with anger and shame. Khalid Jaffri, in his book, exposed Anwar's deviant sexual behaviour. Anwar, according to the writer, was a homosexual. Homosexuality is anathema to Islam, a deviant sexual practice as mentioned in the Qoran about the followers of Luth who disappeared from the face of the earth by

the wrath of Allah. That book destroyed Anwar's political ambition, tarnished his credibility as an Islamic leader, brought shock waves to all and sundry. Anwar was doomed. The road to success became the cul de sac for his ambition, he was marooned and sidelined, torpedoed by the power of a pen.

## *Chapter Four*

# **ANWAR: A DOOMED LEADER**

Anwar would have fought Mahathir tooth and nail for the leadership of UMNO sooner or later because he had no more patience waiting for Mahathir to vacate his seat. The sooner he got rid of Mahathir the better for fear of his deviant sexual practises as a homosexual would be leaked to the public. Khalid's book was amite that tore into the variety of devious masks that he wore as an Islamic leader and deputy prime minister cum minister of finance, a second most important man in the ruling echelon. Anwar was in a dilemma. His homosexual desire had become an open secret. Ashamed and seething with anger, he had to face the rakyat and had to confront Mahathir in the

battle for power. With the exposure there was no looking back, no alternative except to fight for his political survival. No more pretence of teacher and pupil relationship between the two. Suddenly they became two arch enemies clawing at each other for political survival. Either one must be the loser, or the battle would never end until one of them was defeated, smashed to pieces. There was love lost between them.

In the book Khalid laid bare the real Anwar, his "nakedness" and weaknesses as a Muslim leader and the future prime minister of Malaysia. Before this publication there were a few fortune tellers who foretold the fate of Anwar. According to them they believed he would never be a prime minister except in an acting capacity for a mere two months when Mahathir went for vacation overseas. It seemed the speculation made by these fortunetellers had some grains of truth. Anwar's dream of being the prime minister was dashed to pieces after he was sacked from the cabinet and expelled from UMNO for being a homosexual.

Homosexuality is a taboo and a great sin in Islam. The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by God as depicted in the Bible and Qoran should be the guiding principle of God's abhorrence and wrath against homosexuality. Prophet Luth was instructed by God's messenger, Jibrail, to flee from the decadent community and never looked back at the destruction incurred by the mighty God. Of course western liberalism condones homosexuality and lesbianism where one could indulge in the pursuit of sexual

pleasure without limit. Sexual freedom is considered an individual freedom, the freedom to choose one's sexual partners without succumbing to the social norms and behavior. In the West especially, you may have exclusive clubs and bars for homosexuals and lesbians in various cities, and nobody kicks a fuss about it. That is the kind of freedom and democratic license that they treasure and uphold with pride. Their society, religious liberalism and individual freedom to venture into homosexuality permit them to indulge in it without fear of societal pressure. That is the kind of freedom that they cherish with pride.

But Anwar does not live in New York, London, Bonn, Paris or Sydney that cater for homosexual taste from all corners of the world to indulge in this kind of sexual pleasure. Malaysia, being an Islamic country, does not condone homosexuality in the open such as that you find gay and lesbian bars in the West. What is good for the West does not mean it is good for Malaysians. We do not need to embrace all western values blindly. We have our own ethics, cultural values and religious teachings that are more inherent and suitable for us. Though having modern outlook, highly educated and progressive yet most Malaysians are greatly governed by social norms and religious teachings that forbid homosexuality and lesbianism as a way of life. The Malays, who are Muslims, cannot accept homosexuality easily since it is sinful according to Islam. Many liberal, educated Malays were of the opinion Anwar had transgressed into no man's land, he was considered a Muslim outcast. It was a sexual

behavior that Allah forbids according to Islam, when he indulged in homosexual gratification.

Though homosexuality and lesbianism are considered sinful according to Christianity yet it is widely practised in the West. The western society, being individualistic and proud of their individual freedom and the pursuit of individual pleasure, has accepted such sexual behaviour as normal. There is no social stigma, neither boycott nor discrimination. Though in conflict with the teaching of Christianity, there are various schools of thought in Christianity that accept homosexuality and lesbianism as normal and most likely not sinful. But in Islam there is no argument about it. It is sinful since Luth's time until the end of the world. What has been enshrined in the Qoran homosexuality is beleived as God's curse, and there is no controversy about it.

What is acceptable and tolerant in the West does not mean it carries same value judgment in Islam. Former American President Clinton could have sexual dalliance in his office, having his internee giving blowjob on him. Though morally wrong according to any standard of morality yet the American public tolerates such behavior without much rancour. The American government spent US40 million to expose the misbehavior of their president for public consumption, and finally, with all the fanfare and public hearings Clinton was never impeached for misbehavior, and after finishing his term in office, he was a free man. His sexual misdemeanor at the White House becomes a part of history, and the American

public it seems is happy to spend millions of dollars of public fund just to probe into the sexual activities of their president at the White House.

Such immoral behaviour cannot be tolerated in a Muslim society what more if it involves a high ranking leader of a government. Anwar's case is considered very serious and sinful from the Islamic moral and religious value. Furthermore, as a deputy prime minister who would be the future leader of the party and government, his homosexual dalliance not only embarrass the government but bring shame and mockery to the Malays who are muslims. If he were a mere politician of no caliber, a blind follower of the party in power, no one pays much attention to his homosexual dalliance. But Anwar claims himself to be a devout Islamic leader, a man who loves Islam and the Islamic cause above all his vested interest, a reformer whose ambition is to change the society towards his brand of Islamic values. In his book **The Asian Renaissance** he exalted Islamic universal values which can be acceptable to all mankind, transcending ethnic, religious, cultural and geopolitical barriers. That is the idealism and political goals of Anwar's struggle. The Malays, irrespective of their political affiliations, can accept Anwar's idealism and would support him in his race for power. But they cannot accept him as a homosexual. That is the big moral and political issue that made him to be an outcast.

I was told Mahathir took long deliberation before taking action against Anwar. After the exposure made

by the writer Khalid Jaffri Anwar's henchman, Azmin Ali, made a police report against the author. This triggered police investigation into the book and a number of people who were involved directly or indirectly over the Anwar issue were interviewed and interrogated. Since it involved the good name of UMNO therefore the decision on Anwar must be made by UMNO Supreme Council Heated debates took place in the meeting, tension was high, and Anwar, being cornered and accused as a homosexual, lashed back at others but never admitted being a homosexual. He accused others of having extramarital activities too, meaning, they too, cannot be the judges of morality against him. He also accused Mahathir of plotting against him for fear that he would open the Pandora's box of corruption and other vices that would bring shame and Mahathir's downfall as the leader of the party and the government.

It was said that Mahathir, after knowing his deputy's homosexual life, persuaded him to take leave overseas for a year or two in order to coverup the incident and to safeguard the party's image. But Anwar was adamant, and refused to go overseas instead on maintaining his innocence and accused Mahathir of plotting to oust him. Most likely Anwar was afraid his absence from the country, if he agreed to Mahathir's request, would be interpreted as admitting his sexual guilt. But others were of the opinion he would challenge Mahathir head on after the exposure hoping that he could wield enough support to topple the prime minister, and become the

next premier. Unfortunately his plan was shattered, his dream wiped out completely when Mahathir handled the case in a dramatic way.

He wanted to be completely convinced that Anwar had homosexual relationships with other males. Though he knew about it through certain persons closed to him yet he was still doubtful of his deputy's interest in same gender sex. Therefore in order to convince himself, Mahathir and members of the UMNO Supreme Council called the victims, males and females who were involved in homosexual as well as heterosexual relationships with Anwar, to his residence where Anwar's homosexual relationships and his numerous affairs with women were unfolded to the consternation of all. From the stories told by these victims Mahathir and members of the Supreme Council were completely convinced. With the approval of the Supreme Council Mahathir took action against his deputy. Anwar was sacked from UMNO and the cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998. The sacking brought great uproar among Anwar's supporters far and wide. Kuala Lumpur became the center of demonstrations by thousands of his supporters, young and old, who got carried away by emotion on hearing the fiery, emotional speech by the rebel leader at the National Mosque. Again he proved to be the rebel with a cause by portraying himself as the victim of Mahathir's plot. Some of the young demonstrators, some of them school children, were paid to participate in the rowdy demonstrations which led to burning, looting and destroying of public properties. The

National Mosque unofficially became the battle ground where Anwar and his supporters demonstrated to rouse the anger of the congregation after the Friday prayers and lure them to his cause. When Queen Elizabeth came for the opening of the Commonwealth Games in 1998 wild demonstrations took place at the Merdeka Square. While Anwar and his gang called for the overthrow of Mahathir, western media and a few western government representatives was seen to be in support of Anwar. The dastardly act of arrogance and undiplomatic action was shown by Al Gore, former Vice President of America under Clinton administration, who openly supported "reformasi" (reformation) of Anwar Ibrahim during his dinner speech in honour of the APEC delegates in Kuala Lumpur. Some foreign diplomats namely the American, British, Canadian, German, Danes, Australian and New Zealander actively showed their support for the sacked deputy prime minister. The support given by foreign representatives clearly indicated their prejudiced attitude towards Mahathir by their involvement in the internal affairs of Malaysia. With the support given by some foreign governments, the most active of all was the Clinton administration, the people of Malaysia came to realize that Anwar was a blue-eyed boy of Washington. Others accused Anwar being the puppet and agent of America. There were others who condemned him as a traitor to his own country and people.

There was concerted effort from Washington and other western governments, on the one hand, coupled

with western media propagandas on the other to destabilize the Malaysian government. They propped up Anwar's struggle as a genuine fight against dictatorship, corruption and abuse of power by Mahathir. Anwar was portrayed as the icon of democracy and justice and was considered as an incorruptible leader who should win the support of the people for being the "saviour" of the nation! Pas and other opposition supporters joined the mobs to hurl abuse against the government. At his bungalow Anwar's friends and supporters, including Pas leaders, held *sembahyang hajat* (special prayers) requesting Allah, in one breadth, to protect Anwar and at the same time, to destroy Mahathir's leadership. Pas leaders, exploiting on Anwar's sacking, took the opportunity to align itself with the rebel leader. Pas too had a number of *sembahyang hajat* everywhere to seek Allah's protection for Anwar and to bring the downfall of Mahathir.

Man proposes but God disposes. Finally, after a few weeks of lawlessness, of burning and stone throwing against the police, Anwar was detained, and later on charged in court for abuse of power and sodomy. There were huge cry of sympathy and support for him inside and outside the country. Some western embassies sent their diplomats to observe the deliberations of the High Court under justice Augustine Paul. Various so-called human right lawyers from other countries, including Indonesia and the Philippines sent observers to Kuala Lumpur to witness the administration of law and justice in the country as

if the rule of law in these two Asian countries are superior than in Malaysia. Of course these foreigners were trying to find faults with our system of justice and question the integrity and the independence of the judiciary. Knowing that our system of justice is far superior than some of the countries that sent their observers therefore they could not find any loophole to tarnish the image of the judiciary. It was their intention to ridicule the judiciary, as being under the influence of Mahathir, but could find nothing, thus they had to accept the course of justice and the judgment given.

The long trial at the High Court brought about the secretive meetings of Anwar and his homosexual partners at the Tivoli Villa and other places including in his own bungalow under the same roof as his wife and children. Three homosexual partners that spilt the beans exposing Anwar's active involvement were Sukma Darmawan, an Indonesian who was considered as Anwar's adopted brother, his speech writer, a 50-year old Pakistani, named Dr Annies and Azizan, 30 years of age, who was the driver for Anwar's wife. There were other homosexual partners mentioned in the charge sheet against Anwar, among them a university lecturer and a tailor but they were not called to give evidence after the prosecutors were satisfied with the sentence of nine years for sodomy by the judge against the former deputy prime minister and a self-proclaimed Islamic leader.

Between the two judgments, that is abuse of power and sodomy, Anwar is more concerned and aggrieved

by the latter which greatly affected his image as an Islamic leader and as a father to his six children and a devoted husband to his loving wife, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail. The shame engulfing him is beyond words and will remain a stigma to him throughout his life. His future venture into politics, after coming out from his 15 years prison sentence, would be in jeopardy. Most likely he would not be accepted as a muslim leader anymore because of his homosexual preferences. He would be an outcast as an Islamic leader, shunned, ridiculed, sneered at and left to himself. His fate has been sealed for being a homosexual in a muslim society. He can enjoy his life fully, live lavishly and retain his own lifestyle when he is released out of prison. But he will never be accepted as an Islamic leader any more and will be a liability in future political adventures.

The fear of being exposed as a homosexual drove him to plot his rise to power in UMNO and the government as fast as he could. If he could topple Mahathir and be the prime minister, then it would be easy for him to destroy all traces of his sexual deviance. His political enemies could be crippled, destroyed or marginalized so as not to pose a danger to him. He tried to undermine Mahathir's leadership, wooing support from Washington and other western leaders to his side, in the hope of instilling fear in Mahathir and stopped his attacks against the west. Though Mahathir was his mentor, teacher and a father to him yet Anwar misjudged, misunderstood and betrayed him. Being ambitious like Brutus, Anwar

tried to justify his innocence by accusing Mahathir of plotting to oust him from power. Is it not the prerogative of the prime minister to appoint and to sack whomsoever he likes or dislikes according to his own value judgment? Being the party leader and the head of government Mahathir does not need to hatch a plot to fire any minister or a leader in UMNO or Barisan Nasional because his leadership is well-respected and supported by the majority in UMNO, Barisan Nasional component parties as well as the rakyat. If Mahathir wanted to sack Anwar he would have done so when he was informed of Anwar's homosexuality before 1998. The fact that Mahathir urged Anwar to take a long leave from the cabinet and party and stay out of the country showed the prime minister had high regards for his deputy, and did not want any harm to fall on his protégé. As a man in haste to grab power at whatever cost in a short time, Anwar had to trump up an excuse, that is, Mahathir plotted to oust him, as a red herring hiding his naked fear of being exposed as a homosexual.

In 1993 I wrote a book in Bahasa Melayu entitled **Anwar Ibrahim Antara Nawaitu Dan Pesta Boria** (*Anwar Ibrahim: Between Inner Intention and Boria Funfare*) where I did mention in passing the likelihood of Anwar's involvement in homosexuality when he was a student at the elite Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. A couple of weeks after the publication I was invited to his house, through our common friend, saying that he wanted to discuss something with me. The time was about 11.45 pm and

the meeting dragged on until 1.45 am. The meeting was between two of us only. He asked me why I wrote the book on him criticizing him bitterly as if he was my arch enemy and had an axe to grind. Very frankly I related to him what I wrote was what most people were talking about him and his leadership in the party and the government. At that time he was the minister of finance and was planning to topple Ghafar Baba, the deputy prime minister who was also the deputy president of UMNO. He was afraid my book could have a negative impact against his plan to challenge Ghafar for the deputy president's post if his rival were to buy and distribute the books to all 165 UMNO divisions. Anwar was very lucky because Ghafar Baba, the incumbent, gave up defending his political position. Thus Anwar won the deputy president's post uncontested.

About a month or so after seeing Anwar I was given more information about Anwar's homosexual dalliance by a lecturer from one of the universities who had read my book, and wanted to share some informations with me. According to my informant, a gay lecturer who was her colleague confided to her that Anwar had offered 15 lots of pink form shares to him as rewards for having intimate relationships with him. She gave me the name of the gay lecturer to check the validity of the story told to her. Shocked but excited I called a close friend of Anwar and mentioned the name of the gay lecturer to verify the truth of the story. He was taken by surprise, and blurted out on the phone "Pak Ya, how do you know?" That confirmed the story.

Since that day I knew an episode in the life of a homosexual Anwar. That friend opened the Pandora's box and revealed another homosexual relationship of Anwar with an Indonesian man, named Sukma Darmawan who studied at Yayasan Anda, a private school in Jalan Pantai Baru, Kuala Lumpur where Anwar was once the principal of the school. Sukma Darmawan, since age fourteen, already came to Kuala Lumpur, became an adopted brother to Anwar and stayed together in one room with Anwar at his father's house in Kampung Tunku, Petaling Jaya. According to Anwar's friend those who were close to Anwar knew about his homosexuality, but tried their level best to keep it a secret for fear it would damage Anwar's great prospect in UMNO politics and his chance to be the future prime minister of Malaysia.

After knowing his homosexual tendencies from one of his best friends, I came to realize the reason why Anwar invited me to his house in the dead of night before. I am only a political writer, not a politician, neither a member of any political party nor a very close friend to him. Now I realized he invited me to his house because he wanted to know how much I know about him as a homosexual since I mentioned in passing about his homosexuality in my book. Most likely he was afraid I would expose his homosexual interest in the second print of my book in great depth, and that would damage his reputation as an Islamic fighter and leader. Now the secret had been leaked out in court. I did not reprint the book. I know Anwar wore many masks to hide his true identity and sexual

weakness. Anwar is like Dr Jackal and Mr Hyde playing different roles to various audiences. Only a few close friends knew of his homosexual affairs but kept the secret tight among them for the good of their cause and project their mentor as an Islamic political leader.

During the last general election of 1999 a video exposing Anwar's homosexual dalliance as well as his extramarital relationships with some women were widely distributed by certain groups. In the video those involved with Anwar, like Sukma Darmawan gave a graphic picture how homosexual relationship took place between them and another gay by the name of Meor, a tailor, had their conversations, with high dosage of homosexual craving and passion, recorded by a source. In addition to it, interviews with other women who were involved in extra-marital relationship with him were also included to add more spice and flavour to Anwar's sexual exploits.

One of the most damaging video was a confession made by a lecturer to the former imam (religious official in the mosque) named Ustaz Taib Izamuddin who is now Pas MP for Baling, Kedah. Formerly he was the imam of the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur, and the confession was done, I was told, in one of the rooms in the national mosque. The confession was recorded in video where the victim clearly mentioned Anwar as his homosexual partner, and that, after long deliberations, he came to the conclusion that he had to make a confession and asked for Allah's forgiveness for his past sin. This confession

video was also widely distributed until today, and many people who admired Anwar in the past have turned against him, despised him, for they cannot condone homosexuality as part of the lifestyle of an Islamic leader of Anwar's stature.

It is impossible for Malays who are Muslim to accept a leader who is a homosexual. In one of Mahathir's speeches to UMNO delegates for annual general meeting, in justifying the sacking of his deputy, he vehemently made a strong point by saying that he could not be part and parcel of the homosexual sin of his deputy. It is a moral and religious decision that Islam, and by that the Malays, cannot accept a homosexual to lead the flock, and the future generation of Muslims in Malaysia. He had to take drastic and unpopular action by sacking Anwar, and he is willing to face any consequences by his actions.

One cannot deny Anwar had a big followers in UMNO and supporters in various strata of the Malay society. By sacking Anwar Mahathir had to face bitter and vitriolic attacks from within UMNO as well as outside the party. Pas and KeADILan, a political party headed by Anwar's wife, Datin Sri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail, roused the emotion of the people of all walks of life to topple Mahathir and Barisan Nasional from power. The long court case and the hammering of Anwar in the lockup by the former Inspector General of Police, Tan Sri Rahim Nor, had brought sympathy and support for Anwar. There was also restlessness among UMNO members and certain leaders who were more sympathetic to Anwar's cause which led to bitter

quarrels among members in the party, and indirectly, weakened UMNO.

The 1999 general election was a good testing ground to see the impact of Anwar's issue which dominated the campaigns by Pas and Keadilan in the rural areas and Malay majority states in Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis, Kedah and Pahang. The picture of Anwar's black eye became the rallying point for the opposition to win sympathy and votes that turned the tables against UMNO. Kelantan, controlled by conservative Pas, remains under Ustaz Nik Aziz Nik Mat since 1990. UMNO was shocked to find Terengganu fell to Pas, only four seats retained by Barisan Nasional. Kedah, the state of the prime minister, saw 12 state seats, with eight parliamentary seats, fell to Pas. Six state seats in Pahang too fell to Pas. All in all Pas managed to grab 27 parliamentary seats and formed the state governments in Kelantan and Terengganu.

In fact Pas exploited Anwar's black eye to the hilt as its rallying slogan to woo the rural Malay voters that led to its success. Unfortunately for KeADILlan, the political party that Anwar founded and headed by his wife, only managed to scrape through with five parliamentary seats - a poor show of support for the party. Ironically, the so-called Islamic party, Pas, had an upper hand in wresting 27 parliamentary seats from UMNO even though some of its leaders know Anwar is a homosexual. In the game of politics everything is possible even exploiting and manipulating homosexual issue for an Islamic party cause. To Pas

the end justifies the means and that it had no religious inhibition or shame to capitalize on Anwar's homosexuality for its own political goals, that is, to trounce Barisan Nasional in the general election.

It was a traumatic experience and a great struggle for Mahathir and UMNO to sway the Malay voters to their side. Anwar's black eye was highlighted as a symbol of oppression, injustice and abuse of power on the part of the police that triggered the opposition's hatred against Mahathir. There was also silent protests and criticism against Mahathir though the leaders were cautious not to rock the boat that would bring another disastrous split in UMNO as seen in 1987. A small number of UMNO members who were obsessed with Anwar's cult crossed to Keadilan and Pas. None dared to challenge the big boss openly for many still believe Mahathir is the best leader for UMNO and the country. Like Mahathir religious-minded Malays in UMNO find it impossible to accept Anwar, a homosexual, as their leader. Being Muslims they cannot accept a leader like Clinton who had sexual fling with Ms Monica Lewinsky giving a blowjob in the White House. There was a sex scandal which allegedly involved former chief minister of Malacca, Tan Sri Rahim Tamby Chik with an underage 15 year-old girl. Though he was not brought to court yet his name was tarnished, had to resign as chief minister of Malacca, and failed numerous times to regain his party position even as a branch head. It was said that he was a political victim of Anwar Ibrahim who wanted to replace him as chief minister with an Anwar's crony. In other words, the

Malays cannot accept a leader tinted with sex scandal, what more being a homosexual. Another political leader who was dismissed from his job as the menteri besar of Selangor was Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar who was said to have an incestuous affair with his own sister-in-law. Mahathir could not condone such behaviour for fear of backlash from party members and the Malay society at large. It was said Mahathir took a big political gamble when sacking Anwar who was very popular among the Malays and had strong backing from Uncle Sam and other western governments. Risk he had to face at whatever cost. Being a responsible and a good Muslim Mahathir had no alternative except to sack his deputy and face the consequences. In one of his speeches to UMNO delegates for the annual party conference in PWTC, Mahathir reiterated his stand firmly and decisively that he was forced to sack Anwar because homosexuality is anathema to Islam.

Today Anwar is languishing in the prison cell at Sungai Buloh deliberating strategies in the political game to be free. Fifteen years is a long time for him to see the ray of hope to come back into the political arena. KeADILlan Party, headed by his wife, does not make much headway to resurrect Anwar to be constantly under the national spotlight. A number of prominent leaders, like Marina Yusof and Chandra Muzaffar left the party in disgust. The Abim group, one of the pioneers in establishing Keadilan, slowly eclipsed and shield away from the Keadilan leadership. The cry for Anwar seems to lose its vigour. Since the

tragedy of 11 September President George Bush had accepted Mahathir as a liberal moderate Muslim leader that he respects and seeks advice on the war against terrorism. And Pope himself had invited Mahathir to The Vatican City in Rome as a symbol of his appreciation of Mahathir's stature as a liberal Muslim leader of world class. At last, Anwar is left in the cold, a forgotten, rejected leader by his Muslim brothers. The burden of sin as a homosexual has destroyed his credibility as an inspiring Muslim leader. The road to power has disappeared in the horizon. It was only a mirage. He has been unmasked as a homosexual. No tears, rhetoric, neither persuasion can rekindle the old cult of Anwar as a progressive Muslim leader. Everything has turned to ashes – hope and ambition too.

## *Chapter Five*

# **WHY MAHATHIR CHOSE ABDULLAH BADAWI?**

**D**uring his leadership of 22 years as prime minister Mahathir has become very skillful and experienced in the art of "war" against his political enemies within UMNO and Barisan Nasional as well as in the opposition. No one can deny the great contributions done by Mahathir in bringing great social, political and economic changes that shape the destiny of the country and her people. As Mahathir often said his fight for development, peace and greatness of the country is not yet ended. It is his political will, vision and ideas to transform Malaysia into a robust, great industrial country in the future but without sacrificing the spiritual richness of the people. He wants to

revolutionize the thinking and attitudes of the rakyat through knowledge and the advancement of science and technology. In this era of information technology the rakyat and the country must be in tandem in acquiring knowledge to pursue greatness, success and power. Vision 2020, the ultimate goal of the nation to be fully industrialized with knowledge and spiritual pursuit as a common denominator, is the brainchild of Mahathir – a social reformer par excellence.

Being the most senior and influential party in Barisan Nasional UMNO will always play very important role in shaping the destiny of the people and the nation. For 43 years since independence UMNO has always been the ruling party and was never denied to rule the country even once. The racial politics in Malaysia will be the vanguard of racial interests and prejudices, but with good and fair government and leadership among the component Barisan Nasional parties, and with respect to the diversities in cultural and religious outlook, the spirit of unity as Malaysians, Malaysia and Malaysians can overcome most of their racial problems without resorting to violence and bloodshed as happened in 1969.

Many political observers believe UMNO will play a dominant role in the country. Though Barisan Nasional has 14 component parties which incorporates the Chinese, Indian and other bumiputra groups from Sabah and Sarawak, UMNO is considered and acknowledged as the ruling power of the country. Up to now the social contract agreed upon by the founding fathers of UMNO, MCA and MIC regarding power

sharing among various races and the recognition of Malay and bumiputra special rights are still valid. Even though there were some hiccups in the tug-of-war political games among the major races from time to time yet leaders from various communities have recognized that national unity, peace and tolerance should prevail. The tragedy of racial riot of 1969 still casts its dark shadows in the minds of the people, and none wants the tragedy repeated.

In the quest for a deputy prime minister after Anwar's sacking, Mahathir had to be more cautious in his choice of candidates. People had been saying that none of Mahathir's deputy prime minister could reach the premiership as long as his Vision 2020 is not yet fully realized, and he would not retire completely from politics before achieving his political goal. Say what you like Mahathir will never give up his vision or his ideas easily. His commitments towards the development of the country and the success of all Malaysians are his top priorities. His mission to bring greater success to the country and the rakyat will never end, and the "Malaysia Boleh" (Malaysia Can) attitude, inculcated by him, will always be the inspiration to all. He expects his successor to be able to carry on the good work left by him, or, to bring greater and faster success to achieve his dream of making Malaysia an industrialized country that will benefit all the people.

The bitter experience and disappointment over his former protégé made Mahathir to be extra careful in choosing the next on line. First and foremost the

successor must be loyal to him, rich in experience and has the leadership qualities to lead the party and the country. Second, he must be very patient to be the captain of the ship, respected by all and sundry and acceptable by many. Third, the candidate must be honest, has good track record as politician untainted by messy scandals that would smear the party's image. Fourth, he must have a strong Islamic background that will add to his stature as a Muslim leader of repute, and not shrouded in a mask and a pretender to be an Islamic fighter.

Among the three vice presidents of UMNO Mahathir selected Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, as the deputy prime minister though he was only second in rank in the vice president's hierarchy. Datuk Seri Najib obtained the highest votes as vice president yet Mahathir did not select him. Most probably Mahathir considered Abdullah Badawi has more experience in political and administration by virtue of being more than 20 years in the government service reaching the status as deputy secretary general of the ministry of culture, youth and sports before embarking into politics under Tun Razak.

By choosing Abdullah Badawi or Pak Lah as he is popularly known, Mahathir hopes he made the best choice as his successor to premiership when he calls it a day later on. To him Pak Lah has all the good qualities as a politician to lead the government and the party in facing the global challenges. As a party loyalist Pak Lah never waver even though he was once inclined towards Tengku Razaleigh in his challenge

against Mahathir's leadership in 1987. But when Tengku Razaleigh formed Semangat 46 was in the opposition Pak Lah stayed put with UMNO though he was not reappointed as a cabinet minister after Mahathir's triumphant victory over the Kelantanese prince. Though rejected for one term out of the cabinet he never nursed any plot to resurrect himself back into the UMNO leadership mainstream. He paid a heavy price when siding with the challenger against Mahathir but never gave up hope for a comeback when the time was ripe and the political climate changed. His former political secretary, Haji Abdul Fatah (now deceased) once told me when Pak Lah was out of the cabinet many old friends failed to visit him anymore. He was considered non significant, has been, a leader without power and strong followers. He brooded, reflecting the past deeds and the shadowy future in politics – alone in his office belonging to his brother at the Pemas building in Jalan Raja Laut. Pak Lah is not a businessman but a politician through and through.

Whether in the corridor of power or just an ordinary UMNO member Abdullah must be prepared to face the challenge for his success. The success or failure is his own making and the will of Allah, the All Mighty. Man proposes God disposes. For once in his life Pak Lah was cast in the political wilderness because he chose to go against the power that be. Of course he had some regret in his life. But when it comes to UMNO Pak Lah will always give his fullest loyalty to the party cause, and will not shirk his duty to give the best for his beloved party. His parents were

strong UMNO diehards, so is he. It is the only Malay based party that he will die for. A devoted family man, known for his sincerity and simple life Pak Lah exudes warmth in his relationship with others. He is a simple man with a giant mission to offer the best to the country and the people when Mahathir bades farewell to Putrajaya. That will be the test of his leadership, and he will face it squarely with guts and courage.

Anwar Ibrahim was considered an arch rival to Pak Lah because both come from Penang and both were considered having bright future in UMNO and the government. Anwar, late comer to UMNO than Pak Lah, became the usurper to wrestle the leadership of Penang UMNO from the Member of Parliament of Kepala Batas, that is Pak Lah. As always Anwar wanted to be recognized and accepted as the leader in UMNO Penang and not playing a second fiddle to his rival. There was bad blood between the two but Pak Lah, I was told, never attempted to eclipse Anwar in his quest for power whether at Penang state or federal level.

Mahathir might have evaluated the political impact and leadership qualities of the two when Anwar was invited to join UMNO and rose quickly into the inner circle of party leadership after he was successfully elected as UMNO Youth leader in 1982, and later becoming one of the vice presidents of the party in less than 10 years after becoming a member of UMNO. As mentioned earlier Anwar's meteoric rise to power ruffled many feathers in the party and the government but none dared to question Mahathir since it is his

prerogative as the president of UMNO and the prime minister to appoint the man of his choice. Some leaders believed that Mahathir played the game of divide and rule so as to strengthen his power, and simultaneously making ambitious leaders in the party to be extra cautious in their power game. Pak Lah realized Anwar was getting the upper hand and stoop at nothing to oust him from the seat of power as UMNO liaison chief of Penang. When Pak Lah was not reappointed as a cabinet minister after 1990 election he also lost the leadership of Penang UMNO, and Anwar took over.

Anwar's attack on Pak Lah became more aggressive with the hope he would be left out in the political limbo. All UMNO branch and divisional heads, who were aligned to Pak Lah, were lured to Anwar's camp with various kinds of promises in the hope of weakening Pak Lah's influence in Penang in particular and Malaysia at large. To a certain extent Anwar was successful in turning around some of Pak Lah's supporters to his side, or failing which, attempts were made to kick them out of the branch and divisional levels and replaced them with his own cronies. In my meeting with Anwar regarding my book **Anwar Ibrahim Antara Nawaitu Dan Pesta Boria** I mentioned earlier, I did ask him why he hated Pak Lah. Spontaneously Anwar responded by saying he did not hate Pak Lah and instructed his "boys" not to attack Pak Lah for "I can sit at the same table with Pak Lah and having *teh tarik* with him, joke with him and you can tell Pak Lah about it." When I conveyed

Anwar's message to Pak Lah, a week after meeting Anwar, Pak Lah, as usual, was non committal. When pressing further he only said, "If Anwar says so I hope he sticks to it." And he never said anything more.

Of course some UMNO leaders jumped into Anwar's bandwagon knowing he was Mahathir's protégé and would play more important roles in the future. Others see Anwar as a gateway for nurturing their own personal ambition and interests. None wanted to align with veteran leaders who were considered the rivals of Anwar. Pak Lah was one of the few veteran leaders who was marginalized, and was considered a leader without a future what more to be the future prime minister. As a seasoned leader and a trustworthy man Pak Lah wins admiration and respect among UMNO members. Being a straitst forward man honesty and sincerity become part of his life to win support among friends in the party. That is his brand of politics. Pak Lah cannot shower money or trade wild promises in order to win votes and support among party members. If you like him, cast your votes for him. Pak Lah does not believe in money politics because he has none to spare for such immoral purposes.

UMNO political game, though, needs high stakes in money politics. No money, no vote. In fact most delegates to UMNO triennial party election were offered money and other kinds by most of the candidates who seek membership of the UMNO Supreme Council.

Money politics reared its ugly head since 1987 but

became more rampant and out of control in the 1993 UMNO election of Supreme Council office bearers. It was the year Pak Lah lost his seat as vice president to the three *Wawasan Team* of Najib, Muhamad Taib, former menteri besar of Selangor and Muhyiddin Yassin who aligned themselves with Anwar leaving Pak Lah out in the cold..

The new culture of money politics shocked everyone in the party as well as outside. Never in the history of Malay politics votes, allegiance and loyalty could be traded like animals in the open market. A man with great innovative ideas, highly educated cannot make much headway in the rise to power in UMNO if he has no money to buy votes and allegiance from members and delegates be it at branch, divisional and at the highest level in the choice of Supreme Council members.

Mahathir too were shocked that money politics had become a part of new cultural life of UMNO members that has eroded the people's confidence in UMNO leadership. Idealism and lofty aims of UMNO as the bastion in the fight for the protection of the Malay race, Islam and the country have been relegated to the background, becoming a mockery and cynicism among members as well as the general public. Thus many a time he criticized the purveyors of money politics, urging and persuading party members and leaders to refrain from it, bringing back UMNO's idealism in order to regain the support of the Malays in general. Unfortunately, the president too failed after much persuasion, pleading and crying over the matter

during meetings with party leaders and delegates at one of the UMNO annual general gatherings.

Though Pak Lah was absent as a cabinet member for one term, that is five years, Mahathir was monitoring his activities and contribution to the party to see whether he was loyal to the party and the leadership or otherwise. Pak Lah, on his part, knew that Mahathir was watching his movement, and Anwar too was trying to marginalize him from the mainstream of UMNO politics. He kept his cool, cultivating new friends and devoted wholly to the party's cause without much fanfare, publicity to gain recognition.

As long as Pak Lah got the support of the members he would always be the thorn in the flesh for Anwar who feared Pak Lah's come back from his political doldrums.

In the election of Supreme Council members in 1996 Mahathir gave a serious warning to delegates not to condone money politics but choose candidates known for their sincerity, loyalty to the party and not to trade votes with money or other forms of corruption. It was said Mahathir's stern warning of corruption and money politics drove home into the minds of over 2,000 delegates that Mahathir wanted changes in the party hierarchy choosing the best for the Supreme Council membership. The effect of Mahathir's speech had strong bearing in the choice of new members for the Supreme Council. Pak Lah, who was defeated in 1993, was again returned as one of the three vice presidents, two of whom were Najib Tun Razak and Muhammad bin Muhammad Taib. Muhyiddin Yassin

was not elected for that coveted three important posts in the party.

It was a blessing in disguise for Pak Lah who were later taken back as a member of Mahathir's cabinet thus winning the confidence and respect of his boss. Mahathir gave Pak Lah a new lease of life as a member of the cabinet and his speech to the UMNO delegates helped to sway their support for the Kepala Batas Member of Parliament to win back the vice president's post. Being a man with principles he never believes in personal attacks in the quest for power. Neither he attempts to hatch plot for the removal of his rivals, or create tensions in the party for his own political ends. You take him for what he is, no more no less. This is the real character of Pak Lah whether one likes him or hates for what he is. When Pak Lah was reappointed a cabinet minister Anwar was not very happy because he considered Pak Lah as his rival, and still had an impact and influence among UMNO leaders. Though Anwar was already made the deputy prime minister after defeating Ghafar Baba as well as the minister of finance, yet he was nervous and afraid of the return of Pak Lah to the cabinet and becoming one of the vice presidents of UMNO.

Mahathir's political game was shrewed, skillful in putting various rivals in the cabinet as well as in the party's hierarchy thus checking and counter checking one another for his own political ends. Pak Lah had won the trust of Mahathir and now he had to play his cards well to counter moves made by Anwar and his cronies to end his political career.

Pak Lah puts his trust and loyalty first and foremost to Mahathir. He always said there is only one captain in a ship, and Mahathir is the captain, and to him alone he offers his loyalty. It is this loyalty to the party and Mahathir that put Pak Lah in good stead, making Mahathir to have full trust and confidence in him. Through the turbulent years of stress and storms of Anwar's plotting to rid of his rivals and Mahathir in particular, Pak Lah laid low, but maintaining his contacts and good relationships with most of the 165 UMNO divisions. As long as Mahathir is in power Anwar could not undermine and rid Pak Lah from the cabinet and party leadership.

Accordingly, Mahathir looked no further except choosing Pak Lah as number two man to replace Anwar. Of the three vice presidents of UMNO he preferred Pak Lah who had shown undivided loyalty to him during the critical period facing Anwar's challenge. He knows how to repay people who have supported, defended and given utmost loyalty to him. On his part, Pak Lah has no other alternative except putting heart and soul and working hand in hand with the prime minister. Most political observers said Pak Lah is not a very ambitious man and would have been contented with a ministerial post until his retirement from politics. Political circumstances and the upheaval of leadership crisis in 1987 and the abortive challenge of Anwar made him to be an important leader to watch. Luck was on his part, loyalty and sincerity add to his stature as the deputy prime minister.

Since becoming number two man Pak Lah has

become the center of focus besides Mahathir. The burden of responsibility in the running of the country will be greatly felt, assessed and commented by all and sundry. His statements, actions and directions will be evaluated, discussed and criticized. Besides he has to be aware, monitor and build up good networking and ties with all divisional leaders in UMNO as well as having good rapport with leaders from other component parties of Barisan Nasional. A hard work indeed, but he has to shoulder and soldier on with dedication, sacrifice and courage.

Assessment made by various groups of his ability, performance and leadership are varied. If you ask his supporters they would give all the rosy pictures of their admired leader. But many have some reservations on the quality of his leadership when compared to the stature of Mahathir, a world class leader of great repute. The tendency to compare between the two is unavoidable: a measure of certain high standard of leadership is required, appreciated and achievable. During his 22 years as the prime minister, Dr Mahathir has brought about great strides in the development, progress and in shaping the minds of Malaysians. The development of the country is tremendous, and Malaysia has become a model state to other developing nations. The mental revolution, dynamism, self reliance are inspired and nurtured by the dedication, ideas, innovation and planning created and achieved by Mahathir. Is it no surprise that people tend to compare Pak Lah with the success of Mahathir as the barometer of great achievement. With such

comparison then people tend to see many shortcomings of others, and Pak Lah is no exception.

This is the dilemma faced by Pak Lah. He has not been tested yet as a leader of substance though he has been appointed as a cabinet minister holding various portfolios from culture and sports to education, defense, foreign affairs and now as deputy prime minister and the minister of home affairs. These multi experiences, of course, put him in good stead as a leader giving him multi-dimensional outlook in problem solving and mastering the art of survival in the world of political uncertainties and demands. But many feel he lacks oomph, fresh ideas and dynamism that can inspire people to move forward with confidence. His speeches, it is said, lacks inspiration, too mundane, monotonous, colourless, uninspiring. Unlike Mahathir his speeches, though simple, yet it soars the audience with hope and inspiration because of his ideas that go with it. At times Mahathir too throws in little jokes to enliven the audience while keeping the people focused on the content of his delivery. Using simple Bahasa Melayu to cut across the various strata of his audience, Mahathir, conveys his ideas and policies tossing his words around while emphasising on certain points in order to drive home thoughts to be shared with others.

Looking back one would say Tan Sri Musa Hitam, the former deputy prime minister, has the personality, and intellectual demeanor that reflect a man of power. None questioned his integrity and capability as the second man to the prime minister. When he and

Tengku Razaleigh contested for the deputy president's post in 1981 both were considered as prime minister's materials. The non-Malays too respect both leaders for their political outlook, experience and maturity that transcended the Malay political milieu. When these two political titans joined forces to battle against Mahathir in 1987 for the control of UMNO the whole nation was in the state of nervousness and anxiety fearing the result of the contest would result in instability in the country. When they lost both had to part company with Mahathir, though remained inactive in UMNO, Musa was appointed as ambassador to the United Nations and was more active on human right issues. Tengku Razaleigh, on the other hand, attempted to win the support of the people with the help of Pas and a few insignificant Malay political parties to topple Mahathir's leadership and the Barisan Nasional in two elections. Luck was not on his side, neither were the ordinary people. Two election defeats were enough for him to realize the futility to unseat Mahathir. Like a prodigal son, he came back to UMNO to be Mahathir's "gurkha".

Pak Lah did not undergo through storm and stress to retain his position in the party as well as the government. He was considered Musa Hitam's man when Musa was the deputy prime minister. When Musa and Tengku Razaleigh clashed against Mahathir he remained as an outsider and did not commit fully to fight against Mahathir, and neither played an important role for Team B, the Raazaleigh -Musa group. According to some close associates of Tengku

Razaleigh, Abdullah was not in the inner circle of Team B because he was reluctant to make a firm stand with the group. Abdullah was said to be oscillating between his love for UMNO and the pull of Team B. To be on the safe side he took a middle road – neither supporting Mahathir nor too partisan with Team B. Such calculative and opportunistic attitude made him to be an outsider in either camp. At first Mahathir himself was suspicious of Abdullah's political loyalty though he did not join Tengku Razaleigh's bandwagon of Semangat 46, a rival to UMNO.

For one term Abdullah was out of the cabinet. He had to do some soul searching, rejected or ignored by friends, he was really in the political wilderness. Politics is in his blood, and he never face such pressure and risks during his entire political life for he was never out of cabinet since joining politics during Tun Razak's era. But many believed Abdullah wont be long out of the corridor of power once Mahathir was convinced of his loyalty to him and UMNO. Sure enough he came back into the cabinet in 1993 even though he failed to secure vice president's post when he lost it in 1993's election of UMNO office bearers. Being a cabinet minister boosted Abdullah's morale, and the support he greatly needed to be in the seat of power in the cabinet as well as UMNO. Of course he has to face the challenge from other party rivals who also aspire to be at the top, and they too have considerable support among party members.

Abdullah, many people argued, is very lucky to be anointed as deputy prime minister cum deputy

president of UMNO without much fuss, plotting or planning. Many people said the job as deputy prime minister was given to him on a platter to the disappointment of a few rivals who have already charted their course for the top post. One of the major reasons why Abdullah was chosen is that he is considered as "Mr Clean", no scandal, and above all, his uprightness with a good Islamic background. Compared to Anwar Ibrahim who failed to get an honours degree in Malay Studies at University of Malaya, Abdullah obtained an honours degree in Islamic Studies from the same alma mater. Furthermore his father was an ulama, so was his grandfather, Ustaz Mohd Fahim. In the context of Pas's incursion into UMNO's stronghold in Malay majority states, an UMNO leader with Islamic background will help to give some religious credibility to the leadership. With Abdullah known as "Mr Clean", a rare species in contemporary politics, Pas will find it difficult to attack "Mr Clean" personally though the late Pas president, Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor, had called Abdullah Badawi as the keeper of pigs when Abdullah headed the committee on the JE epidemic that ravaged the pig farms at Bukit Pelanduk, Negeri Sembilan. Former Pas president also ridiculed Abdullah's father Ahmad Badawi (Badawi is derived from "Bedouin", the wandering Arab tribe) as the keeper of camels in Arabia! Ironically Mursyidul Am (Spiritual leader) of Pas, Datuk Nik Aziz himself journeyed to Bukit Pelanduk to meet the pig rearers to show his concern while, at the same time, trying to get some political

mileage to his leadership from the unfortunate Chinese and Indian swine breeders who had to kill and burn their pigs in thousands. This is the black humour in UMNO-Pas politics.

Why Mahathir had to choose Abdullah as his number two man? After 22 years as president of UMNO and prime minister Mahathir has turned the tide of history, shaping it and be turned around by it. As the Malay proverb says once there is a flood the sand too changes its position. In the course of shaping history he too has shaped and turned the fate of many other leaders among them were the previous deputy prime ministers. When Musa Hitam was his deputy many political observers thought the two M – Mahathir and Musa – would be an ideal pair. Both were sacked from UMNO by Tengku Abdul Rahman for their political stand against the first premier regarding the issue of the racial riot of May 13<sup>th</sup>. Both were good friends in politics sharing similar idealism to fight for the Malays and to turn UMNO into a dynamic, progressive Malay political party. Unfortunately Musa Hitam had to part company with Mahathir after serving as deputy prime minister for more than five years. After a number of clashes of opinions and differences between them Musa had to quit, and gang up with Tengku Razaleigh to settle scores with Mahathir in their giant fight for political survival in the UMNO election of 1987. Both lost. Those who are staunch supporters of Mahathir harped a ship cannot have two captains. Musa's men were trying to put their boss on par with Mahathir in the running of the country. The

slogan "Two M" coined by Musa's men seemed to irritate Mahathir. When Mahathir was deputy prime minister to Hussein Onn he did not push himself to be on par with his boss. He played a second fiddle to Hussein, and never created an atmosphere of competition and rivalry between them. Mahathir had his differences of opinions with the premier then but kept it to himself for fear of being misunderstood as usurping for power. Unfortunately Musa's boys were too excited, aggressive and voracious in promoting their boss without realizing it would create a rift between Mahathir and Musa. Most likely Musa's men were raw and lacked political experience and acumen thus making them liabilities to Musa in the pursuit for power.

The same thing happened to Anwar when his hangers-on and young inexperienced political advise, overwhelmed with excitement in toppling Ghafar Baba, decided to challenge Mahathir as the ultimate goal of political success. Though a persuasive orator, a superb plotter of deceit, a pretender of Islamic cause, with western support and well-planned party's network, yet Anwar failed to dislodge Mahathir. With all kinds of political agitation and diversions he created for his own personal survival, yet Anwar could not turn the history to his side. At last Mahathir triumphed though with bruised image.

By choosing Abdullah Mahathir hopes he is the best of all, acceptable to many groups in Barisan Nasional as well as the people. Bearing in mind that two of the three former deputy prime minister were

left in a lurch for being impatient and challenged his authority, therefore at 77 years old, after 22 years at the helm, Mahathir has to offer the baton of power to his deputy. By doing so he shows to the world that Mahathir bin Mohamad is not power crazy never intend to a dynasty of nepotism as is done by Lee Kuan Yew. With Abdullah as the present deputy prime minister and will be the next prime minister this October 2003 if God willing, then Mahathir will say to the world that not all developing countries' leaders will cling to power till death. At the height of his popularity at home and acceptable as a world class statesman abroad Mahathir bids his farewell to active politics, to retire voluntarily, to be with his grandchildren.

With Pas making inroads into UMNO hinterlands, and Islam becoming the battle cry that bring waves of support for the so-called Islamic party, Mahathir thought that a strong UMNO leader with Islamic background should be recognized and given preference. Having bitter experience, deluded and conned by Anwar who styled himself as an Islamic leader that could help to win the support of Malays towards UMNO, Mahathir still believes that Islam must be the focal point in the political struggles to retain power and support from the Malay society.

The one million ringgit question that nags the minds of most Malaysians is can Pak Lah be a strong, dynamic and respectable prime minister after Mahathir leaves the scene? Has he the oomph, creative and innovative ideas of Mahathir, the intellectual foresight

and knowledge that become food for thought of world leaders? Has he the resilience and patience, the courage, the spirit to challenge and for a good cause for the country and the people? Can Pak Lah achieve 50% of Mahathir's dynamism and intellectual accomplishments? Of course many are skeptical of his leadership capacity because many compare Pak Lah to Mahathir and not his other rivals. The transformation of the Malaysian society and the great leap in economic and social developments of the country brought about by 22 years of Mahathir's leadership overtakes the three previous prime ministers. Now Malaysia is acknowledged as a world player in international politics, economy and trade, and becomes a model of a modern, progressive developing Islamic country. Mahathir has become the spokesman for developing nations of the world, accepted and acknowledged as a liberal, moderate Muslim leader, and Malaysia has become a showcase of racial harmony, religious tolerance and economic success that attract the attention of world leaders. This is the legacy of Mahathir's statesmanship that will be inherited by Abdullah that will be a test of his ability to achieve greater heights of progress and development for Malaysia and her people. If he fails to achieve the expectation of the rakyat then, sad to say, he will be eclipsed by the great stature and idealism of Mahathir.

Suffice to say Pak Lah's rise to power is through sheer luck for being at the right time and at the right place. He has been under political protection and patronage since embarking into the political arena,

trudging his way up the road paved with numerous booby traps that would cripple the unwearied, devil-may-care type of leaders. When anointed as deputy prime minister there were whispers around that Mahathir protected him when the presidents and the deputy president's posts could not be contested during the UMNO's election of office bearers in 2000. If not for their respect for Mahathir as their leader Pak Lah's position as deputy president would have been challenged by other rivals.

Many leaders in the party are of the opinion that they want Mahathir to lead UMNO and the government. But unfortunately not many leaders are willing to accept Pak Lah to be the deputy president cum the deputy prime minister of the country. Therefore the deputy leader's post must be opened for contest. If Pak Lah were to be chosen by the delegates so be it. Every one will accept readily the decision of the majority. But it never came. Many believed if there was a contest for the top two posts Mahathir would retain the presidency but it was not too sure for Pak Lah. Most likely one of the rivals for the deputy's post would replace him. At this moment there are many rivals for the top posts. They are waiting for the day when Mahathir steps down, and all hell breaks loose when political rivals claw their way to be in the seat of power to prepare for their future.

Every one acknowledges Pak Lah is a good guy having good relationships with all segments of the society and the party. But the good guy image alone is insufficient to withstand the multi-complex

wheelings and dealings in politics of the country and the pressure of global challenges. Compared to Musa Hitam and Anwar Ibrahim before him many people said these two former deputy prime ministers have the aura and personality, the gift of the gab that made them to stand out prominently in the society. At least, they said, these two leaders have the courage to stand tall against the leadership though they failed to win the support of the majority. Pak Lah too had undergone the test of his popularity when he contested for one of the vice president's posts in 1993. On his own steam, alone, lacking enough fund to oil his political machinery, with a handful of diehard supporters, finally he failed to retain his vice president's post. His failure reflected that many UMNO delegates were and are more prone to accept money in exchange of votes and support rather than choosing a "Mr Clean".

Pak Lah cannot be a "lone ranger" like Mahathir who has won the hearts and souls of most Malaysians with his dynamic and charismatic leadership, not based on rhetoric but more on his great intellectual prowess. Most Malaysians were shocked and sad when he decided to leave the center stage of government and politics to Pak Lah. With Mahathir at the helm, there is no sweat. Majority accepts him even though he has no established think tank to render support for his cause. In fact he can stay put at Putrajaya till he dies. This is the kind of reverence, respect and adulation bestowed on him. There is no one who holds such admiration among the multiracial society of our country. Foreigners and other local opposition parties

can belittle or condemn Mahathir but majority of Malaysians will not forsake him as their great leader. Such is the power and influence that Mahathir holds over the people that he alone can shape the destiny of our country and society.

Unfortunately Pak Lah has no such charisma, intellectual capacity and idolation. Therefore he cannot carry the political weight and pressure alone and turns the tide of history to his side like Mahathir. Left alone in his fight for power Pak Lah, many observers said, will succumb to failure. He had already failed to retain the vice president's post in 1993 on his own. At Present UMNO political leadership are made up of various strata in the Malay society. Today most leaders are entrepreneurs, professionals like lawyers, doctors, engineers, accountants to name a few, who are very independent in their attitudes, vocal and knowledgeable. Gone were the days when majority of the leaders were national school teachers, farmers, petty traders, religious teachers, fishermen and rubber tappers. Such polyglot of leaders made it more difficult for any leader of some repute to force his way to the top unlike that of Mahathir. Personality cult as inculcated by Anwar Ibrahim or that of Musa Hitam has no part in the choice of today's leadership. Mahathir, on his part, never plan or plot his way to the top by promoting himself as a cult to lure others to his cause.

Pak Lah too does not promote himself to the level of cult. His character and personality do not attract such publicity stunt, neither does he wants it. This is

the most difficult thing for him to attract others to his side, support and accept him as the future prime minister. At present Mahathir himself helps to promote Pak Lah, in and outside the country, hoping Mahathir's stature as prime minister would oblige others to accept his successor for the most coveted post. The question is will others accept Pak Lah readily as the future prime minister when Mahathir is no longer at the seat of power to help him to win the support of the people? Left alone to chart the course of history after Mahathir, will Pak Lah be accepted favourably without any rival to challenge his leadership?

Looking at the situation in UMNO itself Pak Lah will face a big challenge to his leadership after the general election that is speculated to be held somewhere in April or May 2004 – before UMNO general meeting. The general election is to be held earlier than expected in order to diffuse differences and rivalries among various groups who aspire to be the elite members of Supreme Council of UMNO. The selection of candidates for the general election will give Pak Lah an opportunity to choose majority of his supporters as candidates since Mahathir had made Pak Lah as the director of election, giving him the power and privilege to pick and choose the best of all candidates in order to ensure great victories for Barisan Nasional. Naturally the bulk of candidates, at state and parliamentary levels will be Pak Lah's men and women. Do not be surprised if many veteran, unknown and political upstarts will lobby and push themselves as ardent "loyal" supporters for Pak Lah. The

obsession to be the candidates would make many to depart from old companies, friends and rivals to be in the good book of Pak Lah. Politics makes no permanent friends, neither permanent enemies. For their own personal interest and future many will pledge allegiance to Pak Lah, and will help and give votes to him when he becomes the prime minister. This strategy of outwitting rivals of UMNO's leadership was done before when Anwar Ibrahim was trying to put his men as candidates in the 1995 general election. Knowing that Anwar was trying to select most of his supporters to be the candidates, Mahathir, in turn, had the list of Anwar's selected candidates vetted and scrutinized by him for the final say. By doing so, most of Anwar's selections were rejected, and replaced by Mahathir's men instead. Though frustrated by Mahathir's move yet he was confident that majority of the 165 UMNO divisional heads, who were said to be in the "payroll" of Anwar, would support him against Mahathir for the president's post later on. Unfortunately there was no Anwar to challenge Mahathir at the UMNO meeting because he was already behind bars at Sungai Buloh prison.

The question is, though he has the power to choose candidates for general election, can he doubly sure that most of the candidates, who are mostly the divisional heads, would give their votes to him, and not to his rivals? One must remember Pak Lah is going for number one post, vacated by Mahathir, in order to legitimize his position as prime minister and the leader of his party. In other words, the top post would be

opened for contest, and definitely a number of rivals would challenge him. Even though Mahathir had already informed UMNO members and the citizens of the country that Pak Lah will take his place as premier and president of UMNO it does not mean other contestants cannot challenge him. As a democratic party UMNO leadership must show, respect and honour democratic means of selecting its leadership. All posts in the Supreme Council must be opened for contest. This is the only way for UMNO to choose their best leaders for the 25 elected Supreme Council members who will collectively shape the future of UMNO and also the government.

This will be a great test for Pak Lah to be in the saddle of power as the president of UMNO. If he fails to be voted in as the next president of the party then his position as the prime minister would be affected. Since Tengku Abdul Rahman's days until now president UMNO would be the prime minister of the country. If Pak Lah lost the battle for the top party post he has no alternative except to resign as prime minister. Whosoever selected as president, provided he is also a member of parliament, then he can be appointed as the prime minister of Malaysia. Of course this is only a speculation if Pak Lah is not chosen by the UMNO delegates to make him the president of the party. Never in the history of UMNO an incumbent prime minister lost his top job due to losing his position as the president of the party. Furthermore it is the tradition of UMNO that the president must be the prime minister of the country if Barisan Nasional wins

in every election. So far so good and no quarters in Barisan Nasional tries to challenge it.

If Pak Lah were to be challenged in the coming election of Supreme Council members for the presidential post and lost, then it would create shock and consternation among UMNO members as well as the people. His position in the cabinet would be decided by the new president of UMNO who would automatically become the prime minister of the country.

Mahathir has anointed him as future prime minister and it is up to Pak Lah to undertake the challenge to consolidate his position to prove to the nation that he is the rightful choice to succeed Mahathir. He has to make critical decisions fast and right rather than giving conflicting messages to various interested groups. Through his actions and statements others will evaluate his performance whether he has the making of a good and effective prime minister and the leader of UMNO or otherwise. As past prime minister (after October 2003) Mahathir, on his part, will no longer be the protector of Pak Lah as before. Pak Lah has the power and it is up to him how to utilize and execute the power judiciously for the good of the people and the country. As prime minister he is duty bound to show to all Malaysians and foreign leaders his best. Never mind if he cannot supercede Mahathir because Mahathir is in a class of his own and no one can offer the best leadership like him for many decades to come. But if Abdullah can achieve half of what Mahathir has done for the party, people and the country, then he

has nothing to fear of other rivals breathing hot down his neck.

These fifteen months brings excitement and sleepless nights for Abdullah Badawi who has to show with words and deeds that he is the best among other rivals for the premiership. Many are looking for his faults and weaknesses to be exploited and exposed for their own political end. At this juncture many Malaysians reserve their judgments, and let time decide its course. If the good luck charm of "Mr Clean" brings success in his political ventures to the top within these fifteen long months of agony and ecstasy, then Pak Lah can ride high on the crest of his popularity for UMNO leadership and the leader of the government. Many envisage his leadership will be greatly tested in the coming general election when Mahathir leaves him to be the master strategist in planning, executing and running of the Barisan Nasional machinery during the election time. If Barisan Nasional comes back victorious with bigger majority than in 1999, trouncing Pas in Kelantan, regaining Terengganu, and crushing Pas's ambition to take Kedah, then Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi can claim his laurel as a future prime minister of repute. Then many skeptics and critics of Abdullah will swallow their words for misjudging his ability, capability and influence among the people. The success of turning around the majority of the rakyat to accept UMNO's leadership and trouncing Pas in the coming general election will put him on the pedestal of beloved leaders of the country.

But if he fails to deliver meaningful success to UMNO, especially in regaining most of the lost seats to Pas, or if Pas were successful in retaining Kelantan, Terengganu and forms new state governments in Pahang and Kedah, then Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will bear the bitter consequences of the political catastrophe. No one can salvage him, not even Mahathir. The mood for change of leadership will rise high above the gloominess of election fiasco. If that happens then Abdullah's future as prime minister would be short-lived, may be marginalized and be in the political limbo for years to come. This is the occupational hazards of politicians all over the world, once becoming the hero and the darling of the people, and suddenly eclipsed into oblivion crushed into dust of history. The world is a big stage where politicians wear numerous masks, playing many characters, heroes and villains alike, in the pursuit of power.

Can Abdullah Badawi be a respectable and highly-acclaimed prime minister after Mahathir leaves the stage or become a transit boss for a short period only? That is a difficult question to answer. And that has become the talk of the day.

## *Chapter Six*

# THE THREE VICE PRESIDENTS

*I*n terms of political hierarchy the three UMNO vice presidents, namely Datuk Najib Tun Razak, Tan Sri Muhammad bin Muhammad Taib and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin are regarded as influential men who can aspire for higher political posts in the party. These three have been vice presidents since 1993 when they won the seats under *Wawasan Team* aligned to Anwar Ibrahim. Like chameleon they changed their colours according to changes of political fortune for the sake of their survival.

When Anwar was at the height of his political orgasm these "three musketeers" were thought to be playing more powerful role though they were

considered new and lack experience when compared with other veteran leaders like Musa Hitam or Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. After the great split in UMNO in 1987 many experienced veteran politicians left the party to join Semangat 46 as loyal disciples of Tengku Razaleigh thus creating vacuum in UMNO leadership. Anwar quickly picked his trusted men to fill the vacuum so as to galvanise support among leaders and ordinary members alike. With Mahathir and Daim on one side, Anwar and his trusted men and cronies on the other, thus making UMNO into a two divisive camps that eye one another with suspicion in the pursuit of power. Mahathir, on his part, was trying to salvage his image that was bruised when Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam attacked his leadership with the aim of toppling him in 1987. Being Anwar's right hand men as vice presidents these three men were considered to play very important role when Anwar became prime minister.

Unfortunately their dreams of power sharing with Anwar came to an abrupt end when the fiery rebel leader, a pretender of Islamic cause, was sentenced to imprisonment for 15 years on charges of abuse of power and sodomy. As always in politics the misfortune of a leader would not be shared by others for fear of drowning into political quickmire. Escape routes would be found to salvage their fortunes and to wash themselves clean from the political ruins of their benefactor or mentor. Quick to realize the predicament they were in, they turn the table against Anwar and now becoming loyal supporters of Mahathir. Gone

were the hazy, romantic days of *Wawasan Team* when Anwar was portrayed as the "saviour" of the Malays, Islam and the country from nepotism, corruption and cronyism. Besides these three, there were other ministers, deputy ministers, menteri besar, exco members and MPs who unashamedly identified themselves as Anwar's disciples with the hope that their fortunes in politics would be on a brighter side once Anwar toppled Mahathir and be the premier. These bunch of hypocrites, hangers-on and opportunists are still alive and kicking under Mahathir's roof trying to impress the prime minister and the rakyat that they are willing to sacrifice anything but not their lives and wealth of course.

Of the three vice presidents Datuk Najib Tun Razak is very ambitious to be the future prime minister. Inspired by his late father, Tun Abdul Razak, the second prime minister, Najib was pushed into the political glare at a raw age in his twenties after the death of his beloved daddy. The respect shown to his late father helped his mercurial rise in UMNO politics and the government. Picking experience and influence on the way Najib was looked upon as a rising star to be the future prime minister. During Tun Hussein Onn's administration Najib was made the minister of education and later returned to Pahang as menteri besar of Pahang replacing Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakar who was having problems with the sultan of that state. It was during his tenure as menteri besar that he fell head over heel in love with Rosmah Mansor who was said to be a married woman with two children. He

divorced his loyal wife, a scion of the Kelantan royal family and a niece of Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen, a former foreign minister, to marry the Negeri Sembilan lady. It was said Najib had to divorce his Kelantanese princess because she was suffering from certain disease that would put her in a very difficult position when attending official functions.

If Najib's wife is said to be the woman behind Najib's dream of being the future prime minister so is Datin Seri Endon Mahmud, wife of Abdullah Badawi. She is said to be equally ambitious as Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and relationships between the two rivals said to be quite strained. Whether the two VIP wives would bury their hatchets and warm up as boon friends is yet to be seen. Political observers believe the strained relationships between the wives would create some problems between their husbands later on if ambitious wives go overboard in plunging the fortunes of their husbands to their lowest ebb. However one must not paint a bleak future for politicians having very ambitious wives. There are many cases in history of poor politicians who like to be goaded for greater heights by their ambitious wives. They find great pleasure, hope and confidence if their loving wives could push them to greater success. They were the power behind the thrones. Some of them could turn history to their husbands' advantage. Sometimes however by pushing their luck too far, they turn their loving husbands into the fugitives in their own countries!

Others close to Najib said he is very ambitious if

not for his wife. To him the end of the road is to achieve the premiership like his late father. Like father like son, that burning ambition keeps him one step ahead of every rival, preparing and planning his way up to the top. Unlike Abdullah Badawi who has a handful of close relatives including his son-in-law and friends to be his political advisers, Najib has a well established think tank consists of seasoned politicians, political scientists, economists and others helping him to chart his way through political landmines and widening his political networking among UMNO divisional leaders. Daily exposure in newspapers and electronic media put him in good rapport with the people who would be easily impressed by his statements and opinions some of which are not relevant to his ministry of defence but good for his image as a potential prime minister.

Dr Mahathir mentioned Najib as the likely candidate for deputy prime minister's post, after Mahathir's emotional speech at the annual UMNO general meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2002. Najib was taken aback but happy. Now that the prime minister himself had made the recommendation which means that he would be the number two man at the helm when the power is transferred to Abdullah Badawi. Overwhelmed with excitement and gratitude he made it public his appreciation of Mahathir's trust in him as the future deputy prime minister. Abdullah, bewildered and surprised at the premature suggestion of Najib as his deputy, tried his level best to hide his disappointment and embarrassment. Besieged down

by the press Abdullah told the world that his deputy would be made known after the result of bye-election at Anak Bukit and Pendang. But there was no statement that came from him. Many believe it would be premature for him to disclose the name of his deputy when he himself is yet to be appointed as the next prime minister. Abdullah realized that any statement regarding the post of deputy prime minister would put him in a tight spot if, due to certain unforeseen situations, he could not be the prime minister. Mahathir has a good reason to push Najib as future deputy prime minister since every one knows Abdullah and Najib are two bitter rivals for the top post. Mahathir, in fact, hinted to both to close rank and work as a team for the good of UMNO and the government. Whether they can compromise, work as a team, is yet to be seen. As the architect of modern Malaysia with Vision 2020 as the ultimate aim of a developed nation, Mahathir wants to see that UMNO has a strong leadership to guide the destiny of the country and the Malays. With Abdullah and Najib at the helm of UMNO and the government Mahathir envisages both of them can build a strong united UMNO after he leaves the stage.

If Najib is acceptable and made the deputy prime minister by Abdullah it would bring another step ahead for Najib to reach his dream goal – the prime ministership. Of course he would not rock the boat tarnishing his image as a restless and impatient deputy prime minister that would bring anxieties and problems to Abdullah later on. Maybe he would act like his late father and play a second fiddle as deputy,

patiently waiting for his time and playing loyalty to the boss. Having a good think tank to advise him naturally Najib will rely very much on the advice of his think tank group. What happens if his think tank, after careful research and evaluation, suggests to him to contest for number one post against Abdullah in the coming party election in 2004? In politics, as often said by all pundits, everything is possible. Abdullah and Najib can share the same pillow but both have different dreams. So too are Endon and Rosmah.

Though Najib can be considered an experienced politician holding various ministerial portfolios such as culture and sports, education, and today as defence minister, with a few years as menteri besar of Pahang, yet there are people who have some reservation in accepting him as the deputy prime minister. All these years he is more confined to domestic politics and is never exposed to world politics per se. Like Abdullah he too has never been tested as a political leader, neither has he faced great challenges in his political adventures to the top.

During the great UMNO split in 1987 Najib was rumoured to side with Tengku Razaleigh, and was willing to relinquish his ministerial post. That historic night when Tengku Razaleigh had a gathering in one of the five star hotels in Kuala Lumpur to witness the UMNO leaders who cross over to his side, Najib, who was supposed to arrive at the venue, did not appear. Instead he was with Mahathir's camp in another place on the same night. The promise he gave was never fulfilled. To be or not to be that is the question. Najib

had decided to be with Mahathir who was holding the fort, the real power of the day. Maybe he did not want to jeopardize his political future and be in the political limbo once out of the mainstream politics. He made a wise choice for being with Mahathir who desperately clung to his position, hoping that many influential leaders would be on his side. Seizing the opportunity to move up the ladder of party hierarchy Najib sided with Anwar to consolidate his position. He felt Anwar's charismatic rise to power, and being the protégé of Mahathir, would place him in strategic position in the party for his future. With many veteran leaders camping with Tengku Razaleigh Najib was successful in his contest for the vice president's post in 1993 with Muhammad bin Muhammad Taib and Muhyiddin winning the other two. That was the year Abdullah Badawi lost his vice president's seat when Anwar's political *Warwasan Team* trounced Abdullah who was considered an outsider.

If Anwar considered Abdullah as a stumbling block for his rise to power, knowing Abdullah is aligned to Mahathir Najib, like Anwar, also harbours fear and suspicion of Abdullah's political moves that would eclipse his chance to the top. The theory at that time was that when Anwar became the prime minister, the man to watch as his deputy was Najib. It was said Najib owed a lot to Anwar in making him the UMNO Youth chief after Anwar since most of the Youth leaders were Anwar's men. Some would say Najib was a puppet of Anwar getting orders and instructions from time to time in mobilizing the UMNO Youth as an instrument

for Anwar's cause. Many believed UMNO Youth under Najib only paid lip service to the president but a force to be reckoned with, used and dictated by Anwar. Accordingly when Najib had won the trust and had showed loyalty to Anwar then he was given the "promotion" to contest the vice president's post, leaving the UMNO Youth leadership to another Anwar's would-be disciple, Rahim Tamby Chik who was the chief minister of Malacca at that time. Rahim too won the Youth chief post due to his acceptance into *Wawasan Team* in 1993. His victory was short-lived after he was alleged to have an affair with an underaged girl from Malacca which led to his resignation both as UMNO Youth chief as well as the chief minister-ship. Rahim had a bitter grudge against Anwar for it was said Anwar was instrumental in demolishing his political career over the underaged scandal issue. Even though Mahathir tried to defend Rahim by extolling his great contribution for the development and progress of Malacca as her chief minister, and chided those who attacked Rahim for their personal agenda, unfortunately the political death knell was sealed. Rahim, a Mahathir's man, became Anwar's victim and he never survived as an important leader anymore.

In other words, Anwar had skillfully planned his strategy putting his loyal men at branch and divisional levels, the Youth and Wanita wings and then selecting his most trusted and influential loyalists to capture most of the Supreme Council seats as a preparation to take over the leadership of UMNO when the time was

ripe. Najib could see the rays of hope if he danced to the tune of Anwar. Some of Abim's leaders took the opportunity to be the forerunners and gurkhas of Anwar knowing pretty well there were already slots for candidates in the 1995 election which would make a few of them to be the menteri besar of Perlis, Perak and Malacca. A few others would be made exco members of certain state governments as well as members of the cabinet. Unfortunately the promise was never fulfilled because most of Anwar's candidates were cut off from the final list approved by the prime minister. Thus Anwar's plot was exposed, and his plan crippled.

The road to power as the future prime minister never end. The clock ticked on. New battle plan was drawn up. He had to act fast, and let his adversary be caught by surprise. Those knowing Najib said he played his cards well in order to be in the good book of both leaders, Mahathir and Anwar alike. Whatever happened to any of them he would not be the loser. Most likely he knew Anwar was suspicious of his political loyalty to both him and Mahathir but Anwar's political expediency dictated him to accept Najib in his camp. If he was found to be a liability to Anwar or acted contrary to his wish, then, of course, Najib would meet the same fate as Rahim Tamby Chik. Like Ghafar Baba, Anwar placed his loyal supporter, Kamaruddin Jaafar as Ghafar's political secretary and Najib had Zahid Hamidi, another Anwar's strong supporter, as his political secretary so as to monitor and report all political movements made by both ministers. When

Rahim Tamby Chik was forced to resign as UMNO Youth's head, the man to take over was Zahid Hamidi. In other words, Anwar had his men in most places in the party and government except probably not in Mahathir's group.

If Abdullah Badawi has to cling to Mahathir for his political survival, Najib, on the other hand, made himself to be accepted in Anwar's camp for his political future. Anwar had pulled up Najib in his quest for power in the party until he achieved the coveted position as one of the three vice presidents of UMNO in 1993. That was the climax of his achievement until today. Being smart as an opportunist, Najib broke loose from Anwar when he was expelled from the party and the government. Now becoming smarter, more matured and inspired by his beloved, ambitious wife Rosmah Mansor, Najib plans his course of action to reach his ultimate goal – as the future prime minister.

At present Najib poses a big challenge to Abdullah. After becoming a surrogate of Anwar's cause before the demise of his mentor as UMNO deputy president, Najib has been planning for his future with gusto. Copying Anwar's strategy and with the help of his think-tank Najib can challenge Abdullah for deputy or president's post if the need arises. He feels more confident of contesting the two top posts because he has built good rapport with divisional heads and is said to be generous towards others who do good towards him. People who are close to Abdullah often said Abdullah knows how to say "terima kasih" (thank you) as an appreciation for service rendered, but

nothing more. In the wild game of political survival and success Abdullah may find it hard pressed for victory if his "thank you" approach carries no monetary weight to soothe and sweeten the emotions and hopes of many who help him. In politics nothing is for free. Help and services rendered by all and sundry must be compensated. The only things that are still free are sunshine and rain water. That belongs to God, therefore not open for privatized projects for politicians of the world!

On reflecting the misfortunes of Musa Hitam, Tengku Razaleigh and Anwar Najib is cautious in planning for his future. First and foremost he will never go against Mahathir at whatever cost. No one can match the political acumen, ideas and innovative spirit, and greatness of Mahathir. To go against him is tantamount to political suicide. So he will play the same game as Abdullah, that is, to be in the good book of Mahathir. Abdullah clings precariously to Mahathir for support and endorsement knowing pretty well majority of UMNO leaders are skeptical of his ability to shoulder the great responsibility of leading the party and nation to greater heights. As deputy prime minister at present people seem to accept the fact that Abdullah has reached the height of political power when Mahathir endorsed him after the debacle created by Anwar. If Anwar was loyal to Mahathir there was no chance for anybody, including Abdullah, to be what he is today. Thus the political misfortune of Anwar helps to pull Abdullah to replace Anwar as deputy prime minister as well as deputy president of UMNO.

Many political observers believe Abdullah and Najib cannot make a good pair to lead the government and the party. The suspicion created by political jealousies on both sides make them to be at arm's length though both shake hands and give synthetic smiles to please the audience. It has become a public secret that their chemistry is not right, so too are their ambitious wives. Najib's poker face makes it hard to fathom his real feelings, it does not shown any sign of disappointment and frustration when Abdullah moves to number one position after Mahathir's endorsement in October this year. Knowing that his position would be at stake if his rival were to push him out of the cabinet or relegate him to one insignificant ministry, say the ministry of consumer affairs or national unity, therefore Najib is well prepared for any contingency that befalls him. Abdullah too realizes the danger if he sidelines Najib in his future cabinet. UMNO would be in turmoil if Abdullah decides to cut his rival to size, and putting his cronies, friends and hangers-on in various cabinet posts, as menteri besar, excos or as MPs and assemblymen. As a seasoned politician, loaded and ambitious, Najib has tentacles in various divisional heads that would make Abdullah to take stock of his position if ever he tries to push his political weight around. Some would say Najib could checkmate Abdullah if he is sidelined in the party or the government.

The coming UMNO general meeting for the election of Supreme Council members would be crucial for Abdullah. Najib is hoping Abdullah would

agree to Mahathir's suggestion making him as the deputy. Like Anwar before Najib is willing to play a second fiddle like what his father and Mahathir used to do when they were holding the deputy's fort. But will Abdullah be comfortable knowing his rival is in the same boat as he is? To ignore Mahathir's suggestion is a problem since the old man has been his protector and saviour since coming back from the political wilderness after siding with Team B of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. To accept Najib would give him sleepless nights knowing this Pahang leader and his wife are too ambitious for his comfort.

From Najib's camp Abdullah is not considered above par with their boss. In terms of political experience and maturity, personality, the gift of the gab, exposure to global politics and economy Najib, according to his supporters, are better of than Abdullah. According to them Najib would make a better future prime minister than the MP from Kepala Batas. On the other hand Abdullah's camp would exalt their boss by saying he has good Islamic background that would play an important role in deciding the fate of UMNO against Pas. Without sex scandal, or any scandal for that matter, would give Abdullah an advantage to lead UMNO, and not making him as cannon fodder for Pas or Keadilan to attack him. They too would argue Abdullah was chosen by Mahathir, the prime minister himself to succeed him. Thus giving Abdullah an easy passage to premiership. That is what they thought. Whatever the arguments put forth by these two camps it would be heard, discussed and

evaluated for their pros and cons by UMNO delegates to the conference in 2004. They will decide the fate of every contestant for the Supreme Council committee. The Malays have a saying if luck is a piece of stone then it will drop to the bottom, if it is a coconut husk then it will float. That seals the fate of all.

The other two vice presidents, namely Tan Sri Muhammad bin Muhammad Taib and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, are considered as light weight leaders compared to Najib. Mohd Taib had sealed his fate to aspire to greater height in UMNO hierarchy since his court case in Brisbane, Australia had smeared his image as a Malay leader of substance. He was charged of contravening Australian currency restriction by trying to bring out more than A\$5,000 from the Brisbane airport. Though he was discharged and acquitted the stigma haunted him. Back at home he was also charged with corruption by transferring a piece of land to his driver. This charge too did not carry weight, and again he was acquitted. According to some sources he was framed by Anwar's group who was disenchanted with him when he failed to give up his post as menteri besar Selangor to Anwar's crony, Dr Solomon Selamat. Mohd was one of the three candidates for vice president's posts under *Wawasan Team* of Anwar in 1993. In fact Anwar wanted to use him for his political ends to put his man as Selangor menteri besar replacing Mohd who would be given a cabinet post. Knowing that Anwar had his own political agenda to push him to Federal posting he stood firm not to relinquish his state post which gave

him the power and all the things he desired. Failing to make Mohd to kowtow to him, Anwar's relationship with Mohd turned sour. Mohd turned to Mahathir trying to show his everlasting loyalty to the old man when he knew he was not in the good book of Anwar anymore.

Mohd could have played a very important role in UMNO and the government if he did not do rash things that put him in troubled waters. When he was menteri besar he eloped with the daughter of Sultan of Selangor, Ku Yah, who was then a beautiful divorcee. They married in Thailand. It was said he married Ku Yah in the hope of cementing good cordial ties with the Sultan. Unfortunately he created more domestic problems that led to the divorce of Ku Yah after having a child with her. His political fortune nose-dived after the Brisbane debacle, the corruption case and his domestic problems led to his resignation as the menteri besar, and was replaced by Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar. Though holding a vice president's post in the party Mohd is not offered any other government neither directorships of any UMNO related companies. Neither is he a member of Selangor State Assembly. He only hangs precariously as one of the vice presidents of UMNO. Many people believe he can be a power broker having some influence over divisional heads who still respect him as a leader to be reckoned with. Considered a generous politician and having good public relations with UMNO members Mohd is marking time as vice president at the moment, hoping to retain the post in the coming party election.

At this predicament Mohd has no choice except to support Abdullah for the premiership with the hope Abdullah would rehabilitate him, giving him a parliamentary constituency in Ulu Selangor to contest in the coming general election. With Dr Mohd Khir Toyo at the helm in Selangor and doing a very good job as menteri besar there is no likelihood for Mohd Taib to be reappointed to his old post as menteri besar again. If he is not given a parliamentary seat to contest most likely he will also lose his vice president's post to other contestants who are current ministers or menteri besar. Like Najib and Muhyiddin, who are cabinet ministers, they are highly regarded and respected by UMNO members, and could deliver most of the requests made by leaders in return for votes later.

This is the dilemma faced by Mohd who has no position in the government and neither a member of parliament nor a state assemblyman. The luck has run against him, and he has to wait for the right moment to be revitalized and given more responsible job with power in the government after the election. He is patient and resilient and can sustain the cost of wooing others to give votes and support later on. Those who know him said he has enough fund to generate interest on his side when the time comes for him to retain his vice president's post.

In jockeying for power Abdullah would find an ally in Mohd provided he would be prepared to lift Mohd from his political limbo at the moment. As a power broker and having a good rapport with most

UMNO leaders in the country Mohd can play an effective role to win votes and support for Abdullah in the coming party election. Some people said Mohd can deliver votes more than Abdullah's men put together. If that is the case Abdullah would be rest assured of victory as the president of UMNO if no other heavyweight party leaders challenge him. For his own political survival in the future Mohd won't turn traitor against Abdullah because he cannot afford to antagonize but needs his help to break the political stagnation he faces at the moment. In fact Abdullah needs others to help him to be at the top because he knows he cannot get majority support from the divisional heads on his own steam..

The other candidate who aspires to be the deputy prime minister cum deputy president of UMNO is Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, the present minister of consumer affairs and domestic trade. Of the three he is said to be less ambitious than Najib but is still longing for a second slot if conditions prevail, and having a good partner to work together for it. On his own steam Muhyiddin would not make much headway knowing well his limitation and political enemies, especially from his home state of Johor, who try to sideline him to gain higher promotion in the party. Some sources say Abdullah prefers Muhyiddin as his running mate since he is less ambitious than Najib. But political circle in Barisan Nasional does not give a good rating to Muhyiddin who is considered lacking in exposure in international political acumen to be the number two man. If Abdullah were to go along with Muhyiddin,

many political observers said, both would be turned down by the UMNO delegates. Members want UMNO to be led by dynamic and action-oriented leader like Mahathir or someone who can aspire and unite the Malays in the face of challenge by Pas. Abdullah and Muhyiddin do not make strong pair to lead the government and party therefore both would find it difficult to be at the top.

Being a vice president of UMNO does not mean a person is definitely acceptable by the members to be the future president or deputy president. For every three years every member of the Supreme Council would be reelected or challenged by others for the prestigious positions as the policy governing body of UMNO. For Mahathir 22 years at the helm of UMNO and the government is a record that is hard to beat, a testament to his durability, greatness of achievement, admiration and support by UMNO members and rakyat alike. For a deputy president's post the struggle to maintain one's position is up to the guile and skill of the candidate and acceptance by the delegates themselves. The failure of Ghafar Baba to maintain his position as deputy president of UMNO showed that the divisional leaders of the party rejected him and voted Anwar instead. Since Supreme Council members had decided to maintain the status quo of president and deputy uncontested after 1996 election of office bearers therefore Mahathir and Anwar stayed put at their respective positions. When Anwar was sacked and Abdullah replaced him as the deputy president cum the deputy prime minister again the

Supreme Council passed a resolution that there would be no contest for the president and the deputy's post in 2000 UMNO election. That saved both of them from being challenged by others.

Now the political scenario is different. It is no longer to retain Mahathir as the president since he has decided to leave the center stage of politics as prime minister and UMNO's president. Though he had appointed Abdullah as his successor there is a strong urge by UMNO members to give them the right as a democratic party to decide on the new team after Mahathir. It is not that they object to Mahathir's choice of his successor but they feel that the final say must be with the members. If they make wrong choice of leadership then they will pay for their grave mistakes. Leaders can come and go but their destinies as well as the destiny of the party and the nation must be decided by the members of UMNO themselves.

This is of cardinal importance for the survival of democratic rights of party members of UMNO in shaping the future of their party and the nation as a whole. The general feeling of the people is that UMNO after Mahathir must have strong, forward-looking, dynamic figure who has the intellectual capability to face the challenge of global politics and to tackle problems, domestic and foreign, with candour and respect. UMNO cannot survive as a leading political party if it is led by weak and colourless president and deputy president. They must share some of the good leadership qualities of Mahathir who has made Malaysians proud and UMNO respected by others.

Thus the search for good leadership will make the ordinary members and leaders to be extra cautious in their acceptance of a particular leader. Mahathir, many people say, can offer suggestion that Abdullah would be his successor, and Najib a likely candidate for the deputy president's post. That is only a suggestion and it is up to the members and leaders of UMNO to accept or reject it.

If Abdullah were to choose Muhyiddin as his running mate the likelihood is that both will be challenged by other veteran and experienced leaders of who think for themselves as more worthy for leading the party. There are many aspiring leaders who watch on the sidelines to see history in the making when Abdullah will lead UMNO into battle with Pas in the coming election. If he brings back more seats for UMNO that were lost in 1999 election then his stature as a leader has been tested, acknowledged and rewarded as the rightful beneficiary of the UMNO presidency. With that recognition his position as prime minister would not be questioned. But if luck is not on his side and UMNO fails to regain former seats in 1999 or suffers serious setback, alas, Abdullah will get the brunt of attacks by others, and be left to lick his battle wounds. If UMNO leaders were to go against Abdullah it is not that they defy or belittle Mahathir in his choice of successor, but they want a more dynamic leader to lead the party to greater height of success. Like Brutus in Julius Caesar who said it is not that I love Caesar less, but I love Rome more. So said UMNO leaders on Mahathir's choice.



*Can these three vice presidents retain their positions in the next UMNO election in 2004?*

## *Chapter Seven*

# **TG RAZALEIGH: THE MAN TO WATCH**

**T**engku Razaleigh Hamzah is a household name among UMNO members. His challenge against Mahathir for the presidency of UMNO in 1987 brought shock waves among Malays and Malaysians in general. Never in the history of UMNO a rivalry that brought split and anguish among UMNO members when Mahathir, the incumbent, won by the whiskers with only 41 votes majority. The fight was bitter to the last with Tengku Razaleigh forming a new party – Parti Melayu Semangat 46 to invoke nostalgic spirit of the old UMNO. Mahathir established UMNO Baru (New UMNO) when the old UMNO was declared “dead” by the High Court when a number of

delegates to the UMNO general meeting in 1987 came from unrecognized illegal branches. A decade in the opposition, joined hands with Pas under the canopy of Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah, Ku Li, as he is affectionately called, avenged his failure to wrestle power from Mahathir when Pas and Semangat 46 trounced UMNO with 39 seats to none for UMNO in 1990 election. UMNO was put to shame. Ku Li had avenged his loss against Mahathir. Pas, on the other hand, enjoyed the power to rule Kelantan after years of frustration before joining forces with Semangat 46.

Never before UMNO was humiliated by the voters in Kelantan with such deadly blow in that election. That revengeful victory was an emotional solace to Ku Li and his followers. To Pas it gave the party the opportunity to form a state government with Nik Aziz, Mursyidul Am (Spiritual leader) as a new menteri besar of Kelantan. It was the first time in the history of Malaysian politics an ulama (Islamic religious scholar) became the head of a state government. In the conservative Malay state where traditional Malay culture and the ustaz (religious teachers) are highly respected Pas found a willing partner in Semangat 46 to challenge the mighty UMNO. Marriage of convenience between Semangat 46 and Pas, in fact, helped Pas the most in gaining power in Kelantan with Semangat 46 playing a secondary role in the administration of the state.

After two general elections (1990 and 1995) Ku Li realized that Pas had played out his party and was edging out slowly the influence of Semangat 46 in

the running of the Kelantan state. Furthermore the brand of Islam Nik Aziz upholds is considered conservative, dogmatic and anti worldly development. Though Ku Li tried to compromise with the desire to establish an Islamic state, and Islam as *addin*, that is, a way of life but Pas's attitude towards Semangat 46 was not conducive for a long political relationship. Being a liberal-minded, former UMNO leader and a stature above the kampung politics of Nik Aziz and his cohorts Ku Li finally had to leave Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah. Having spent millions of ringgit for the upkeep of Semangat 46 Ku Li at last lost "semangat" to go on fighting a losing battle against UMNO and Mahathir's leadership. After much deliberation and discussions with his loyal supporters at last Ku Li decided to dissolve Semangat 46 and the whole lot of them rejoined UMNO for the sake of Malay unity.

Many consider the return to UMNO is a wise move by Ku Li and his loyal followers. Being a veteran leader, admired by many, with thousands of followers still extolling his great contributions towards UMNO, Ku Li has an important role to play. One cannot consider him as "has been" by virtue of his being in the political wilderness for a decade.

He is one of those few UMNO leaders who are well respected his advice is sought, by corporate figures in the country as well as abroad. He is an important source of information on politics and economics that are sought by foreigners and Malaysians alike. Even though he is not in the cabinet

yet many interested groups seek his opinions and advice from time to time. His mansion at No 31, Jalan Langgak Golf, Ampang has become a meeting place of various groups of people from foreign ambassadors, politicians, bankers and corporate figures, politicians from various shades of ideologies, intellectuals, writers, poets, NGO and trade union leaders and all and sundry. With his good public relations, ever smiling and down to earth attitude towards rakyat make Ku Li a very popular political leader that who make others look with envy.

The Kelantan prince was drawn into UMNO by the late Tun Razak. Trained as an economist from Belfast University, he was appointed the chairman of Pemas, later Bank Bumiputra. When Petronas was established he was appointed its chairman too. Later on he was asked to contest in the general election and won the state seat in Kelantan as well as the parliamentary seat in Gua Musang. Ever since his involvement in UMNO Ku Li never lost his seat even though he was once in the opposition leading Semangat 46. His political track record is unmatched by most politicians either in UMNO or the opposition.

When he returned to UMNO, dissolving Semangat 46, Ku Li did not express any regret for his action. Known as a man of principle, a fighter for the Malay rights but liberal and democratic in attitude, Ku Li is more at home with other liberal-minded leaders of UMNO rather than the conservative, orthodox ulamas of Pas. A decade in the opposition had taught a bitter lesson to Ku Li, that is, Barisan Nasional is too

powerful for any opposition party to defeat. Though in 1990 election the combined forces of the opposition party namely Semangat 46, Pas, Berjasa, Partai Rakyat, DAP and PBS in Sabah were formidable yet they failed to topple Barisan Nasional. Finally Barisan Nasional won 127 seats, Pas 7, DAP 20 seats, Semangat 46 eight seats, PBS 14 seats and Independence four seats. In 1995 election again Semangat 46 did not show good performance. It only managed to obtain six parliamentary seats. That sealed the fate of Semangat 46 and its leaders. At last, when Semangat 46 was dissolved, the six MPs crossed over to UMNO.

One of the reasons why Ku Li rejoined UMNO and dissolved his party is to unite the Malays thereby strengthening Malay political power. Being a leader with foresight and a true blue nationalist Ku Li believes only UMNO has the resilience, experience, integrity and good Malay leadership that win the trust of the majority of Malays as well as the non Malays in the country. For the last 46 years, through storms and stress, UMNO still wins the trust and support of Malaysians to govern and manage the country. It is a testament of solidarity among Malaysians of various races, cultures and religions with UMNO as the leading senior partner of Barisan Nasional.

When meeting Mahathir about rejoining UMNO Ku Li did not give any precondition for it. Neither did he ask for any ministerial position for him or his loyal followers. Being the loser in the battle for power Ku Li knew he was not in the position to demand anything except to be accepted as UMNO members. But

Mahathir was magnanimous. Though they were once arch rivals he did not take Ku Li for granted. He appointed Ku Li as a nominated member of UMNO Supreme Council as a sign of respect for his once adversary and now an ally fighting for a common cause. Being a veteran UMNO leader of substance and influence Ku Li has to softpedal his moves in the party so as not to create suspicion on certain leaders that he is going for the top job. First and foremost he does not want to antagonise Mahathir or having unnecessary problems with him. Of course he wants to be accepted and recognised as a veteran leader who has contributed a lot for UMNO since early sixties. If Mahathir needs his advice or opinions on political or economic matters he is ever willing to help in whatever way he can. An assistant to Ku Li told me his boss is only interested in strengthening and uniting all forces in UMNO making it the strongest Malay party. If UMNO is united and strong then it can consolidate Malay power base, promote the cause of Islam more strongly and meaningfully in the context of global needs and challenges without resorting to violence on archaic doctrines and orthodoxy that distorts Islamic progress and acceptance as a religion of this world and thereafter as inculcated by Pas.

Opponents of Tengku Razaleigh in UMNO said his popularity has dwindled in Kelantan though he was considered the giant killer that wiped out UMNO completely in 1990 election. Since rejoining UMNO and being appointed as head of state liaison committee of UMNO and made the director of UMNO election

committee for 1999 election, Ku Li was hard pressed to make inroads into Pas strongholds. Finally UMNO managed to win two seats in the State Assembly while he alone scraped through with 2,000 odd vote majority in Gua Musang for the parliamentary seat. Many expected Ku Li could bring back the power of UMNO in Kelantan. But, alas, for the last three elections Kelantan remains as Pas strong bastion and UMNO fails to make much impact among the rural, conservative poor Malays. Though Ku Li is the uncle of the present Sultan of Kelantan, and has great influence over the people of the state yet, after rejoining UMNO and dissolving his Semangat 46, the people of Kelantan rejects his leadership. The failure to retake Kelantan from Pas in 1999 election made Tengku Razaleigh an UMNO leader without a strong supporting base in his own state. At this juncture political rivalries among Kelantan UMNO leaders tarnish the good name of UMNO and weaken its influence among the people. Many political observers are of the opinion if this unhealthy trend of dissensions and rivalries among state UMNO leaders continues, there will be no chance for UMNO to take over Kelantan from Pas.

The failure to wrestle Kelantan from Pas cannot be blamed solely on Ku Li's leadership. There were many factors that hinder UMNO from taking over Kelantan that has become Pas's fortress since 1959. Pas constant campaigns of anti UMNO with all kinds of wild accusations and hatred poured into the minds of the poor, mostly simple-minded kampung folks,

that led to rejection of UMNO whom Pas accused of being secular as opposed to its so-called Islamic flavour. In 1999 Terengganu too fell to Pas leaving only four state seats to UMNO. Another Pas ulama (religious scholar), Datuk Seri Haji Hadi Awang, becomes the menteri besar replacing Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, also an ulama from UMNO, who was considered "has been" in UMNO politics but was still clinging to power for self interest. Like Kelantan, Terengganu is also another bastion of Pas. Now both states have ulama as their menteri besar, and both attempt to introduce Islamic law in their respective states which was greatly opposed by UMNO and the Federal government. The crux of the problem is that Pas is successful in undermining the rural, simple Malay rural folks in accepting Pas as the true Islamic political party that will bring them to heaven whereas UMNO is a secular political party and mainly interested in material wealth and worldly happiness, not heavenly gain and success.

Many political observers believe UMNO's debacle in Kelantan does not mar Ku Li's chance to contest the highest two posts in UMNO, namely the presidency or the deputy presidency. He is considered a national figure who had shown his impact in UMNO politics when he challenged Mahathir for the top party post in 1987. Many said his influence in UMNO is still intact, and he can mobilize his supporters throughout the country if he were to contest for the top two posts next year. In fact his mansion at 31, Jalan Langgak Golf, Ampang, has become a gathering

place of his supporters for years, before and after rejoining UMNO. He does not need to hop from one state to another to gather support since he has numerous loyal supporters and assistants who will do his bidding, any time, any where throughout the country.

According to some sources from his camp Ku Li will not contest against Mahathir for the top post if the prime minister wants to lead the party and the government after the general election. Since Mahathir has decided to resign all government and party posts then Ku Li can make a move to contest either the presidency or the deputy's post. It all depends on the suggestions and advice of his loyal assistants and political analysts and political friends. Looking at the political scenario with Abdullah as the next prime minister, a choice of Mahathir, it is most likely that Ku Li will challenge Abdullah. Many believe Ku Li will make a better UMNO president and the prime minister than Abdullah. Ku Li's credentials and integrity, political experience and economic acumen as well as being a former minister of finance and international trade made him very popular and well regarded and respected by politicians, corporate players, government officials, diplomats, and other groups in our multiracial society. Unlike Abdullah who has been under the protection of Mahathir until today for his political survival, Ku Li, as every Malaysian knows, had challenged the leadership of UMNO. Mahathir won only by 41 votes against Ku Li. That mega fight for the top post shows Ku Li has great

influence and many followers among UMNO leaders and the delegates. Besides for two general elections he fought tenaciously to upset the Barisan Nasional government but failed. He has the gut, great determination to change the course of history for him and the people of Malaysia.

Now is the time, most people say, for Ku Li to make another attempt for the presidency of the party. Being considered of same political stature as Mahathir, Ku Li has to go for top post in order to lead the party and shape the destiny of the nation. Many of his supporters want him to challenge Abdullah whom they consider an "untested" leader, a Johnny comes lately. If ever Abdullah wants to pick Ku Li as his running mate in the coming party election it is quite unlikely Ku Li would play second fiddle as Abdullah's deputy in the party and the government. In 1987 UMNO election Abdullah was considered a Team B supporter of Ku Li and Musa Hitam. Therefore it is impossible for Ku Li to be under the directive of Abdullah if he was given the deputy president's post. Pride on both sides would make them an odd pair if Abdullah is number one man in UMNO and the government.

Many believe Abdullah wont make Ku Li as his running mate for fear that he would be eclipsed by the popularity of the Kelantanese prince. Deep in his heart he knows Ku Li is very influential and experienced politician and has good grasp of economics and trade that made him stand tall among the corporate leaders and foreign investors. Compared to Ku Li Abdullah, most people say, cannot match the

experience, knowledge and maturity of Ku Li to lead the country during this global challenge. Of course Ku Li can work with Abdullah if he becomes the prime minister and not otherwise. As it is Abdullah is considerable to take the leadership of UMNO and become a successor to Mahathir as the prime minister because Mahathir wants Abdullah to be accepted by UMNO leaders and other component parties of Barisan Nasional.

Many people are questioning Mahathir's rationale in appointing Abdullah to be the upcoming prime minister when he decides to vacate the post in October this year. Many people agree it is the prerogative of the prime minister to appoint a deputy prime minister from one of the three vice presidents. He chose Abdullah. Nobody created any fuss about it. But when he suggested Abdullah to be the next prime minister on the pretext of peace and stability in UMNO then people start to question his rationale. The prime minister's post is very important and hitherto all prime ministers come from UMNO. Therefore the post of UMNO president must be selected and voted by the UMNO delegates in order to get the best, the most capable and well-respected leader to head the party and the government. Their argument is not that they do not like Abdullah or against Mahathir's choice of the future prime minister. They want UMNO to uphold democratic choice of candidates and the delegates must make their own choice. If they choose a certain leader to be the president of UMNO then it is their collective responsibility in making such decision. If

anything goes wrong in their choice of the party president then they, the majority, are to be blamed.

At present nobody wants to highlight their real feelings of protest. They will go along with Mahathir since he is still the prime minister and the president of UMNO. Come October 2003 there will be a barrage of protest and demands that all positions in the Supreme Council should be opened for contest. The next election of new office bearers in the party will see numerous changes in UMNO leadership. The positions of president, deputy president and the three vice presidents of the party will be keenly contested because these people will become the future leaders after Mahathir. Stability and peace in UMNO cannot be achieved if the party is led by a leader considered weak, intellectually incapable of facing the global challenges. To preserve democracy and the selection of the best candidate for the presidency then there is no alternative except to give free rein to party members to make their choice. This will prompt Ku Li and other veteran and experienced leaders in UMNO to come forward to seek positions in the Supreme Council as elected members..

Sources close to 31, Jalan Langgak Golf mentioned of Mahathir's displeasure of Ku Li coming from the cold to take over the leadership of UMNO. The old rivalry and bitter experiences in 1987 made Mahathir weary of Ku Li's political moves. The anti Kelantanese group in UMNO will try to deny Ku Li the chance to win the first and the second positions in the party. If he were to win one of the vice president's posts then

the likelihood of him to be the future prime minister or deputy prime minister would be temporarily checked thereby giving breathing space for Abdullah Badawi and his running mate to lead the party and the government. Whether any group or individuals opposed to Ku Li or others to challenge Abdullah for the presidency is yet to be seen. Many are cautious and are waiting for the right moment to make their political stands. After the general election is over and UMNO general meeting is to be held then only then we will see there will be moves among UMNO leaders demanding all posts in Supreme Council to be contested.

What Tengku Razaleigh hopes, according to his supporters, Mahathir remains neutral in his speech at the general assembly. His speech must not reflect a tendency to promote someone indirectly that would swing the delegates to give their votes to a particular individual as hinted by the prime minister. Never mind now he favours Abdullah Badawi to be the next president of UMNO and the prime minister. Let the UMNO leaders decide the future of their party once Mahathir vacates his lofty position. As long as Mahathir remains neutral in his presidential speech on the opening of the general assembly then the delegates would find it easier for them to make their independent choice of their party president, his deputy, three vice presidents and the rest of the members of the Supreme Council.

In order to reestablish their political rapport after returning to UMNO it is said that Tengku Razaleigh

was instrumental in advising his nephew, the Sultan of Kelantan, to offer the most distinguished award of "Darjah Kerabat" of the Sultan of Kelantan to Mahathir. That award means the prime minister has been given the honour of being a member of the Kelantan royal family. It also means that relationship between Mahathir and members of the Kelantan royal family is cordial and warm, and that old bitterness between the Mahathir and the Kelantan royalty is buried. Most important of all, it is hoped that Mahathir would accept Tengku Razaleigh as his long lost friend again, and bury their differences for the sake of party unity.

Is Mahathir impressed by the award? Yes, most likely. Knowing him to be a friendly man but an introvert Mahathir must be surprised that the Sultan of Kelantan, the nephew of Tengku Razaleigh, would bestow that distinguished award that is only given to members of the royal families. Being an experienced politician who was nearly trounced by Tengku Razaleigh in the 1987 UMNO election, Mahathir fully understands why the award was given after Tengku Razaleigh returned to UMNO. Whatever the real reasons given by the palace, Mahathir or Tengku Razaleigh regarding the award one thing is clear. It serves certain political vested interest on the part of the Kelantanese group to resurrect their most revered leader, Tengku Razaleigh, as the next prime minister.

The Kelantanese especially want to see Tengku Razaleigh after Mahathir would be the next in line. Some rekindle the age old story of how Mahathir

became the deputy prime minister after Tun Hussein Onn, then deputy prime minister, was appointed to take over the premiership when Tun Razak Hussein died in London. Hussein Onn wanted to appoint Tan Sri Ghazalie Shafie, the home minister, to be the deputy prime minister, the post vacated by Hussein Onn. When knowing of Hussein's move the three vice presidents at that time namely Ghafar Baba, Tengku Razaleigh and Mahathir met Hussein telling him that according to UMNO tradition he must appoint one of them as deputy prime minister, not Ghazalie who was only a member of UMNO Supreme Council. Acknowledging his mistake, Hussein then summoned Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh, not Ghafar, to his office and told both of them to discuss between them who would be the deputy prime minister. Tengku Razaleigh, it was said, told Mahathir to take the post and he would be waiting for his promotion later on. So when Mahathir later became the prime minister in 1981 after Hussein Onn resigned due to health reason, Tengku Razaleigh, it was said, was expecting Mahathir to appoint him as his deputy. His dream was shattered when Musa Hitam too contested for the deputy president's post of UMNO in 1981. In that fight between two good friends Musa won. Tengku Razaleigh lost. That bitter episode left a political scar in the mind of Tengku Razaleigh which culminated in his challenge to Mahathir's leadership in 1987 which he lost by a whisker - 41 extra votes more to Mahathir.

As mentioned earlier Tengku Razaleigh will not challenge Mahathir any more. He respects Mahathir's

leadership and is willing to help and strengthen UMNO's unity for the sake of the Malays and Islam. Many have the opinion Mahathir would not give up his leadership and that he would die in office. He really shocked the nation when he mentioned of his coming resignation in October 2003, and Abdullah would be his anointed successor. Tengku Razaleigh and a few other rivals waiting at the corridor of power were disappointed when Mahathir informed the nation that he leaves UMNO and the running of the government to Abdullah Badawi. A few of these ambitious veteran politicians believe that they must be given the opportunity to prove their worth as leaders by contesting all the positions in Supreme Council. This is the only democratic way for UMNO to get the best leaders to lead the party and the government.

Do not be surprised if many divisional heads of UMNO would send their divisional resolutions to party headquarters demanding that all posts in the Supreme Council should be opened for contest. It is very difficult and undemocratic for the president of the party to deny the right of the majority if they demand all posts to be contested. This is the golden opportunity for ambitious and veteran leaders to test their popularity among the delegates. If Tengku Razaleigh does not dare to venture for the top party post or the deputy's post, then, he will miss the boat. Good opportunities do not come often. Once you hesitate, too calculating, too slow, then it is gone forever.

Some UMNO leaders, especially from the east

coast, want Tengku Razaleigh to be the next prime minister cum the president of UMNO after Mahathir. Since the first and the fourth prime ministers are from Kedah, Hussein Onn from Johor therefore it is fair for Tengku Razaleigh to be the next big boss coming from Kelantan. This argument, in fact, does not carry water since the appointment of party leadership does not go by rotation from various states in Malaysia. It is the delegates who make the choice and one has to influence the delegates to give them most votes for the presidency of UMNO that will entitle the lucky candidate to be the prime minister of Malaysia provided he is an elected member of parliament. Tengku Razaleigh has all the credentials of a good leader of prime minister material. The big one million ringgit question is, is he going to challenge Abdullah Badawi for the top post? If he challenges Abdullah, is he sure to win? That is a big question for him to ponder. But if Abdullah wants a seasoned and well-respected deputy to help him, then, Ku Li should be considered.

To maintain political stability and respect for UMNO leadership after Mahathir, Abdullah has to find the best partner to help him in running the country. Ku Li is one of the few UMNO leaders who has the charisma, experience and respect to give new dynamism to UMNO leadership in particular and Barisan Nasional government in general. Besides Ku Li has good rapport with other component Barisan Nasional parties by virtue of his former portfolios as minister of trade and industries and later as minister of finance. Furthermore Ku Li's cosmopolitan life

style allows him to be at home and familiar with the social and business norms of non-Malays and foreigners alike. It can be said Ku Li is very adaptable and can be at home with simple kampung villagers, religious teachers as well as with investors, corporate figures and leaders of foreign countries. Many believe that if Abdullah were to choose Ku Li as his deputy then his leadership would be considered solid and can withstand the challenges of time.

## *Chapter Eight*

# **RAFIDAH AZIZ AS NUMBER TWO**

**I**f all things go as Mahathir planned it then Abdullah would glide smoothly, undisturbed as the next prime minister. As mentioned earlier his rise to power and becoming the future boss of the country is due to sheer luck and Allah's grace. Had Anwar been patient waiting for his time, and playing his political cards well he would today be the man to take over the premiership. Abdullah then would be in the political doldrums, languishing marginally with impunity. Considered as an arch rival to Anwar, coming from the same state of Penang both are suspicious of each other, each trying to gather supporters not only in all UMNO divisions in Penang but also throughout the

country. To gain prominence as the leader with caliber one has to win the support of the majority of divisional leaders of the state, and from there, one moves to capture the support of most of the 165 divisions of UMNO

Abdullah knew he could not wield much support among most of the Penang UMNO divisional heads during Anwar's hayday as the minister of finance. With money, charm, good networking among the divisional leaders Anwar was able to push Ghafar aside as the deputy president in the 1993 election of UMNO Supreme Council members. Abdullah, one of the incumbent vice presidents, lost his position to Anwar's cronies in the *Wawasan Team* consisting of Datuk Najib Tun Razak, Tan Sri Muhammad Mohd Taib and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. Failing in his attempt to retain his vice president's post led him to relinquish his party position as the head of the Penang state UMNO liaison committee to Anwar. In politics there is no permanent friends, neither permanent enemies. Those who supported Abdullah formerly as their state UMNO leader showered their allegiance to Anwar thus depriving Abdullah the power base and status of a state leader. They changed their loyalty like changing their crocodile underwear without fuss, nor regret. He was only a divisional head of Kepala Batas UMNO. Nothing more, nothing less. His political journey did not end when he lost his vice presidentship in 1993. He was fortunate that with the privilege and power of the prime minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, retained him as the foreign minister. That saved him from political

quicksand. Being a seasoned and cunning politician, Anwar stalked his prey sending adverse signals to his supporters to oust Abdullah in the coming 1996 party election. To Anwar, Abdullah was a thorn in his flesh. He knew Mahathir saved Abdullah's political stake by retaining him in the cabinet as part and parcel of Mahathir's "divide and rule" strategy to avoid any political moves among ambitious UMNO leaders to challenge his authority and leadership. Mahathir's mega fight against Tengku Razaleigh in 1987 to retain his presidency made him extra cautious for any sign of dissidence and challenge to his position. Though favouring Anwar as his successor as the prime minister yet Mahathir trudged cautiously for fear of Anwar's being a Brutus in his obsession and craving for the premiership before the time decided by Mahathir himself.

Furthermore Abdullah had Anwar's marital secret in his hands that made him jittery for fear of damaging his image as an Islamic leader, and as future prime minister. It was said Anwar eloped with Wan Azizah, his present wife, to be married in Thailand. Wan Ismail, the father of Wan Azizah, it was told, was fuming with anger. Anwar, an Abim leader, had smeared his good name by eloping with his beloved daughter. It was said he wanted to shoot Anwar if ever he set eyes on him. It was during this marital incident that both Anwar and Wan Ismail asked Abdullah to be the mediator to solve their differences. Out of goodwill, and being good friend to both Wan Ismail and Anwar, Abdullah helped to reconcile the adversaries. That good deed

by Abdullah made Anwar grateful to him. But, alas, the greed for political power made them poles apart in their political outlook. There must not be any opposition to Anwar's hunger for power. Abdullah, considered a stumbling block to his obsession for power, had to go. Only time could tell, and he had the time, money and political power to crush Abdullah when the right time came. But Anwar misread Abdullah's good intention. The story of Anwar's elopement with Wan Azizah was never spread by Abdullah. A number of Abim's leaders and some UMNO leaders knew about the elopement. The story was spread like wild fire by certain groups who were opposed to Anwar's greed for power in the party. Some Abim members who knew of Anwar's elopement, and being sidelined by Anwar in their requests for projects and positions, were also said to spill the beans to others.

As a matter of fact, Anwar should not be nervous about his elopement. It took place when Wan Ismail, Wan Azizah's father, opposed Anwar's relationship with his daughter. In the seventies Anwar was an Abim leader who was considered an opponent to the government then, Wan Ismail, ironically, was the director of psychological warfare whose primary task was to eliminate all oppositions to the government, and Abim was one of the NGOs that was under the surveillance of Wan Ismail before he becomes Anwar's father-in-law! Though many people knew of his elopement no one paid serious attention to it, and was never made into a political issue by the opposition or

Anwar's rivals in UMNO. Therefore Anwar's image as a dynamic political leader was not tarnished by it. The marriage was solemnized according to Islamic rites in Thailand and also in Malaysia. Though some quarters were trying to capitalize it as a political issue to smear Anwar, but it was never considered a big issue and therefore the story was buried into oblivion.

Anwar wanted to be the only UMNO leader of high standing in Penang. No rival must stand in his way to the top. Thus he was trying his best to put Abdullah into political cold storage but to no avail. This MP from Kepala Batas had no scandal that could open the Pandora's box, or any skeleton in the closet. He had no money to squander for his own political mileage. He was known as "Mr Clean" in and out. That was the only priceless asset that gives Abdullah the political mileage and respect that he yearns for. No one could challenge him on that score. None could smear him on any scandal whether on corruption, womanising or abuse of power. Anwar could not find any good worthy reason to kill Abdullah politically. That made Abdullah a dangerous man to Anwar in his pursuit for power in the party and government. Though Abdullah lost vice presidency in 1993 to Anwar's three "stooges" yet he took it in good strides, quietly shaken and fearful that his political future would be in the limbo, and he is ostracised from the mainstream of UMNO politics. Being a staunch Muslim he believes that Allah will bestow him His benevolences in the future and only by the grace and power of Allah one could gain His pleasure or displeasure. The failure of

retain-ing the vice presidentship in 1993 was considered a test by Allah on his patience, gratitude and humility towards the Maker.

In his political journey for power Abdullah was never considered a power that be. No one ever thought he would be a prime minister's material, or for that matter, as the deputy prime minister of today. He has never exerted himself, neither portrayed to be a very ambitious politician clawing and plotting his way up the ladder of power by hook or by crook. That is not his style of politics. Many believe he can be a good minister, a good worker, but not the top leader to guide the destiny of the party or the government. He owes his party and cabinet posts to Allah and Mahathir. He knows if Anwar were to be the prime minister he would be out of the cabinet, and most likely remains as Kepala Batas UMNO divisional chief. Nothing more, nothing less.

Looking at the present political scenario in UMNO he has been assured by Mahathir as his successor as premier and the party's leader. Assuming that every rival accepts Mahathir's decision for the sake of party unity who would be the most likely candidate Abdullah would choose as deputy prime minister and deputy leader of UMNO? Datuk Paduka Rafidah Aziz, the minister of international trade and industries, can be a likely choice as Abdullah's deputy. Being the head of Women's wing of UMNO, a very experienced minister in international trade, Rafidah can be an important deputy and an ally of Abdullah. She has been a minister of international trade for more than a decade,

well known as a workaholic, an expert in economics. That made Mahathir and the country proud of her dedication and performance as the trade minister. Agile and sharp Rafidah is a no-nonsense minister, a patriot who will fight tooth and nail in international trade meetings for Malaysia's cause and national interest.

With Rafidah as his deputy Abdullah will find much relief in handling the politics of the nation. Rafidah never shows her ambitious streak to be the deputy prime minister as is obvious in the actions of a few seasoned male politicians. She would be satisfied with her present cabinet job which every one knows she has done tremendously well when compared to some other ministers who are power hungry but intellectually and creatively poor. Knowing Abdullah needs a strong and sound economic minister to buttress the cabinet as his deputy, Rafidah is the right choice for him to consider. Though Abdullah was a former minister of foreign affairs it does not mean that he can handle everything well and take stock of all things political or economic. None of the present cabinet ministers has the respect and intellectual capacity as that of Mahathir who runs the country for 22 years building a strong, dynamic nation of 23 million people into an era of giant development, a national identity of her own, a sound and solid leadership that bring great pride to all Malaysians.

Of course Abdullah has his own style of managing the country and politics yet many quarters are skeptical of his ability in wielding his power to harness the vast resources of the country and to settle the ever

increasing economic, political and social problems as years drag on.

He is not a political clone of Mahathir who has the resilience, intellectual power and fire of a leader with a strong determination to pursue a giant step into the global challenges of today's era. Sizing himself as the future prime minister one would say he really needs a strong, very experienced deputy to complement and nurture his shaky leadership. If he were to choose a yes man, a person not considered a deputy prime minister's material, a weakling, then he will encounter insurmountable problems to maintain the status quo and respect of the people. The priority and well being of the nation is paramount to one's political ambition. This is an era of challenges, of the wise and the best in the people and the political and economic leadership of the nation. One cannot choose a lame intellectual and political crony to prop up a shaky leadership. The people will always want the betterment of their life, peace and prosperity and justice and fairness for all. A weak leader cannot manage the country if he fails to fathom the undercurrents of expectations and hopes among the educated populace. This is a dilemma faced by Abdullah. He has to adopt, adept and bring great strides of wise, decisive actions that would enhance him as a potential great Malaysian leader of some repute. No eulogizing of his past history, past achievements. Let the people decide, not him. Let the people praise, not him.

Mahathir has decided to choose Abdullah as the best among the lot before embarking on his retirement

in October with the cherished hope Abdullah makes wise and matured decision as his deputy. He was wise not to jump the gun when Mahathir suggested Najib Tun Razak would be a good candidate for deputy prime minister's post before his appointment as the next premier. Abdullah can accept Mahathir's wish or find another suitable candidate who is more suitable and agreeable to his kind of politics and friendship. Mahathir had chosen Anwar Ibrahim, an ex ISA detainee, a rebel with a cause, as his deputy before on the expense of other more experienced and dedicated members of UMNO Supreme Council and the cabinet. Therefore it is Abdullah's turn to choose the right candidate to work in tandem with him through stress and strains. He has the right to reject Najib if his gut feelings say Tun Razak's son is not the suitable deputy to share some of his innermost feelings and political actions. Whatever his decision be, for better or for worse, will be judged by the people. Not him.

Even though it is his privilege to choose his deputy yet he has to take into account the ability and personality of the candidate who can complement him in evolving a united and dynamic dual leadership in shaping the history of the nation post Mahathir era. Of course its is a difficult task since Mahathir has transformed an agro-based backyard into a vibrant, dynamic super corridor highway for the nation and the people. If the people accepts Mahathir's achievements as the basis of the nation's great leap forward, then, Abdullah has to bring greater achievements than Mahathir in order to win

appreciation and acknowledgement of the nation for his leadership quality. Then he can say with pride he has made it. The people will look upon him with confidence and pride. He has passed the crucial test of the people, accepted, praised and supported.

At this juncture many quarters are looking and studying his every move to evaluate and to give judgement of his ability to perform and to lead the nation. The choice of Mahathir cannot be construed as the perfect choice of the people. Looking from UMNO's political interest and Mahathir's own judgment Abdullah would make a better premier than Najib, Muhammad Taib or Muyhiddin. But if Anwar did not act like Brutus and waited doggedly for his turn to lead the government, be a loyal disciple to Mahathir, Abdullah would not be the deputy prime minister today. It was told two weeks before the sacking of Anwar as deputy prime minister as well as an UMNO member Mahathir was still shrouded with doubt of Anwar being a homosexual. When Ummi Hafilda Ali, the young woman who accused Anwar of being a homosexual, was brought to see Mahathir and other UMNO leaders at Sri Perdana, the official residence of the prime minister, then only he made his final decision to sack Anwar from all government and party's post. In other words, Mahathir had a soft spot for Anwar and took him under his wings with the intention of making Anwar his successor. Anwar was considered an upstart and opportunist of the highest order on coming into UMNO's fold by many rivals in the party yet no one dared to challenge Mahathir in

anointing Anwar as his successor. Abdullah was never considered a contender for the deputy premiership when Anwar was Mahathir's protégé. The road to power was specially tailored for Anwar to be in the saddle as the next premier.

Of course there were rumblings and frustrations among some political rivals against Mahathir for giving much leeway and favours to Anwar. How come Mahathir groomed Anwar as his successor when the man from Permatang Pauh, a former Abim leader, was an aggressive opponent of UMNO before joining the ruling party? Why did Mahathir ignore some of the dedicated and loyal UMNO leaders and groom some of them to be leaders of tomorrow, and who knows, as future prime minister? Mahathir had created some enemies among the UMNO leadership who were dissatisfied with his choice of Anwar to lead the party and the government after he retires from active politics.

It was Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Musa Hitam who led the battle to topple Mahathir in UMNO general meeting of 1987. It could be seen UMNO was split into Team A for Mahathir and Team B for Razaleigh and Musa Hitam. Anwar vigorously campaigned for Mahathir for he had a big stake in the outcome of the contest. If Team B were successful in trouncing Mahathir then a new political scenario would be created in UMNO with Team B followers holding the fort, with Mahathir as well as his loyal supporters in the political backwater. Abdullah, like Najib, were hesitant to give whole hearted support to

Razaleigh and Musa though they identified themselves with Team B. They were opportunists looking for the winning horse to ride. When UMNO was declared unlawful party by the High Court judge after Razaleigh challenged the validity of UMNO general assembly of 1987 when a number of delegates for the annual meeting were from an unlawful UMNO branches, Mahathir took action by establishing UMNO Baru, a New UMNO, replacing the old UMNO that was declared illegal by the court. Abdullah sided with Mahathir and left Team B for greener pastures in UMNO Baru.

He made a wise choice politically by being with Mahathir and UMNO Baru though for one term he was not appointed to the cabinet. Abdullah's loyalty and devotion to UMNO is unquestionable. With a big group of experienced UMNO leaders joining Semangat 46 headed by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, UMNO was devoid of good and experienced and well-respected leadership. A new crop of UMNO leaders took the helm at branch and divisional levels. Many of Anwar's men were appointed to become leaders to fill the void created by the dissenting former party leaders who joined Razaleigh's bandwagon in the opposition. Anwar quickened his political pace in strengthening and spreading his political tentacles and network in the party and the government, paving the way to the top with his cronies and hangers-on at various levels of party hierarchy. Abdullah was considered an outsider, a featherweight leader who was ignored and despised. He was no threat to Anwar

and never considered a rival to Anwar for the premiership. When Abdullah lost in his quest for one of the three Vice President's seats in 1993 to Anwar's "Wawasan Team" consisting of Najib, Muhammad Taib and Muhyiddin many party members thought Abdullah's political days were numbered.

It was an accident of history that turned the political fate of two rivals of Anwar and Abdullah. Once considered an illustrious leader to take the mantle of power, Anwar by his own misdeeds and moral degradation as a homosexual, becomes a prisoner at Sungai Buloh jail, while Abdullah, shunned and belittled by Anwar and his gang, was catapulted to replace Anwar as deputy prime minister and would be Mahathir's successor as future prime minister this October with Allah's blessing. Success does not come easily to Abdullah. He has to prove his leadership qualities to be accepted and recognized by the people and his own rivals. Twenty-two years of Mahathir's leadership has transformed the country from the agricultural backyard into a thriving, dynamic, modern industrial nation that rivals most of the major countries of the world. The rakyat, on the other hand, have seen much progress, enjoying better living conditions, more prosperous, better educated and proud to be Malaysians. Mahathir's era is the best of all in terms of progress and development for the country and the people.

The question is can Abdullah maintain the status quo or bring greater heights of progress and developments for the country after Mahathir? Can he instill confidence among the rakyat of his leadership?

Can he outshine Mahathir as a political leader, a leader with visions, an intellectual social reformer who dares to shape the destiny of the nation and her people? In fact Abdullah has a lot to learn in overcoming his weaknesses. He has to learn and act fast. Frankly speaking, he is under the watchful eyes of the people who are restless in wanting to see greater strides of progress in the development of the country. He is always being compared to Mahathir, Musa Hitam and Anwar, the disgraced former deputy prime minister. The majority of the people are skeptical of his ability as the driving force to lead the country as best as Mahathir. Being number one man is one thing, but one has to prove beyond reasonable doubt that he is on par with Mahathir, or at least, a bit below him in political standing. Mahathir can promote Abdullah and praise him for the quality of leadership he admires in his present deputy. Respecting and admiring Mahathir for his leadership therefore many people would not want to rock the boat and challenge his choice of his successor for the premiership. At present Abdullah is in the shadow of Mahathir, protected and promoted by him in order to gain the acceptance of the multiracial population of the country. Without Mahathir's protection and support he would be moulded by his political rivals, leaving him perhaps severely wounded and scarred.

He must realize his leadership is much to be desired. Others are waiting at the corridor of power to pounce on him once Mahathir leaves the scene and becomes an ordinary citizen. They will wait patiently,

harbouring vengeance and planning various political strategies to outmaneuver him in the coming UMNO general election when Abdullah would be challenged. At present they will monitor and record all his political actions and statements that are considered anathema to his political leadership and survival. Many political observers have the opinions that Abdullah would meet his Waterloo in the coming UMNO election of new office bearers after the general election. The fact that UMNO annual general meeting was postponed this year is to give some breathing space for him to select candidates for the election who would be among his ardent supporters in the coming election for office bearers in UMNO Central Committee later on. But if he were to choose his cronies who are considered weak in leadership, lack grassroot support among the rakyat, too detached, self-centred, arrogant and corrupted, then, his poor selection of candidates would boomerang on himself, and on his inability to choose the best. At present many people are talking and whispering especially among UMNO members and general public of his poor choice of candidates as his assistants in his ministry.

Many believe Abdullah cannot survive the barrage of work and demands as a new prime minister if he were to be surrounded by incapable, weak and self-centred assistants and self-claimed advisers who are with more concerned with their bloated ego and arrogance rather than looking after Pak Lah's political interests. Many people have expressed their displeasure at the ego-inflated attitude of some of these

parasites who do not augur well with Pak Lah's down to earth attitude. The ministers, being the focus of public attention, should warn and chastise their assistants and hangers-on to be more rakyat friendly because their wrongdoings would give adverse and negative reactions on the ministers themselves. Pak Lah, not only be aware of the negative and arrogant attitudes of some of his assistants but also must take actions against some for his own good. The feedbacks given by some who were snubbed by one of his assistants who is self-centred and bureaucratic in attitude made Pak Lah the butt of mockery and ridicule by others.

Many quarters are of the opinion Pak Lah is suffering from inferiority complex and find it very difficult to push himself out of the inferiority complex cocoon. Twenty over years as a government officer (reaching the position as deputy secretary general of the Ministry of Youth and Culture) before embarking on a political career had molded him to be more meeting prone, becoming stereotype, making decision by consensus, but lack the tenacity, sharpness and courage to take prompt individual actions. Unlike Mahathir, a doctor by profession with a short stint in the government, he is more action-oriented, very creative and more reformistic in attitude. He loathes lengthy exhausting deliberations for making decisions. He is impatient with people who are lazy, bureaucratic and slow in executing decisions. Meetings are meant to warm up discussions, toying with various ideas, but the final decision must be made by himself as the

head of government. Mahathir is a lover of knowledge, pursue knowledge and execute decisions based on knowledge.

Pak Lah and other politicians know they do not possess such intellectual capacity and courage like Mahathir in shaping the destiny of the nation. One understands there will not be another Malaysian leader of Mahathir's stature in the near future. Of course there will be no Mahathir twins in UMNO or BN politics. But it does not mean Pak Lah must move at his own slow pace without realizing the aspirations and demands of the rakyat for more development, more changes to better their own life and well-being. He must accept the fact that rakyat are becoming more demanding on the government to manage the country well, bringing with it more prosperity, justice, tolerance and unity among the people. The rakyat will never accept or tolerate any ruling party that is poor and weak in leadership, devoid of ideas and foresight. Mahathir is a dynamic leader, a man of clear vision in forging a strong knowledge based populace, inculcating self reliance and highly motivated for progress. This is what the majority of the rakyat want.

Living under the shadow of Mahathir Pak Lah is considered a leader untested for bigger challenges. Some people consider Abdullah on par with Ghafar Baba as deputy prime minister without oomph, poor in ideas. They do not give much impact on the people with their kind of leadership and their style of approach to win the hearts and minds of the rakyat. Unlike them Musa Hitam has the foresight and intellectual bearing

readily captured the attention of the people. Anwar Ibrahim, on the other hand, capitalising on his persuasive rhetorics, and political gimmicks was successful in attracting people to his cause. Pak Lah, sad to say, lacks oomph, fresh creative ideas to give people the benefit of accepting him as a potential great Malaysian leader of the future.

Therefore he needs a more dynamic and highly respected deputy to prop up his leadership. If he were to choose Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz as deputy prime minister she can enlighten him on the economic and political activities which will help Abdullah in sharing the burden of leadership of the party and the government. Rafidah has self-confidence drawing her experience from lecturing on economics at University of Malaya before entering politics. By virtue of being a minister of international trade she has made waves and impacts in international trade meetings and negotiations which bring success and respect for Malaysia. She can be of great help to Pak Lah as his deputy because of her vast experience, talent and vast knowledge in economics and international politics. With her as his deputy, Pak Lah is sure of her undivided loyalty to him. Further more, Rafidah has been heading Wanita UMNO for more than a decade after Tan Sri Aishah Ghani relinquished the leadership for a younger leader, that is Rafidah. It was during Anwar Ibrahim's deputy premiership that she lost the top post to Datuk Zaharah Sulaiman in 1993. It was only for a term, and afterwards she was re-elected by the women delegates as their undisputed boss. In terms of party

leadership and experience Rafidah is one of the privileged few among the Malay women to be accepted on par with the vice presidents of UMNO Supreme Council by virtue of her leadership of the UMNO women's wing. Thus she can be considered as one of the top leaders in UMNO who helps to shape the destiny of the party, and indirectly the government as minister of international trade.

Many political observers believe Pak Lah needs a deputy of strong character like Rafidah to give a balance in the top leadership of UMNO/BN and the government. He needs a leader who can inspire confidence, trust and acceptance by the multi-racial society of Malaysia. Rafidah has shown her capability and leadership qualities that outshine most of the male ministers or politicians in UMNO as well as in BN component parties. Being a woman should not be the criteria for rejecting her for the second most important position in the government. If Pak Lah really wants a well-respected, highly educated and experienced leader to be his deputy, then Rafidah is one of the candidates to be given serious consideration. Denying Rafidah the opportunity by choosing a male politician of doubtful ability, or one who is considered as Pak Lah's crony, on the basis of gender differences would not put him in a good light. Pak Lah must be seen to act decisively to give the best leadership for the country and the people. He must instil confidence in himself in the choice of his deputy. The people must accept him as their leader, and to prove it, he must try to readjust himself to the needs and demands of the

rakyat. Of course there are a number of political opportunists, hangers-on and scandal-rich party stalwarts who cherish dreams of being number two man in the cabinet. If Pak Lah chooses someone who is not up to the expectation of the general public then he will face premature downfall from his lofty position of power.

Gender differences should not be the basis of discriminatory if Rafidah were to be selected. Malaysia is not a Taliban-type government that discriminates and abuses women depriving them of education and holding prominent positions in the government. Since UMNO ridicules PAS as Taliban inspired in its treatment of women folks therefore UMNO should show its magnanimity in accepting a woman to be the number two leader of the country. Pak Lah should lead the way in accepting a woman leader as his deputy. In Pakistan and Bangladesh they are women leaders who led their countries as prime ministers. Today Megawati Sukarnoputri is the President of Indonesia. Though these Muslim countries have a large segment of conservative Muslims yet women are given the opportunity to rule the countries. If Rafidah were the choice of Pak Lah she will be the number two in rank in the Barisan Nasional led government and should not create any political ripples among component members of Barisan Nasional. The non Malay parties in Barisan Nasional are more open-minded and liberal in their acceptance of women leadership and they would not make great fuss if Rafidah is appointed for the post.

UMNO too would not kick dust if Pak Lah explains to members and the Malay public of his choice of a woman deputy prime minister. It is his prerogative and privilege to choose his deputy. No woman has been made a deputy prime minister since independence in 1957 therefore Pak Lah has to explain to the rakyat the rationale of his choice. The Malays will not oppose Rafidah if Pak Lah takes the plunge to give a woman leader of Rafidah's stature the deputy's post. They will appreciate Abdullah more because he has made the best decision in the choice of the candidate.

However, some quarters in UMNO may kick some fuss if Rafidah is appointed. Their opposition is due to Rafidah's no nonsense attitude in executing her duty which, some may say, not "rakyat friendly" which should be read not easy to be "buddy-buddy". Those who were used to getting projects, certain positions and facilities from certain politicians would find it harder to coax Rafidah into succumbing to their demands. Others who were accustomed to getting their way would naturally be unhappy if a woman politician of Rafidah's stature be second in command in the government. Besides those aspire to be Pak Lah's second man would feel humiliated and dejected if Rafidah won the day. All kinds of plots would be hatched and political booby traps laid in order to cripple Pak Lah and to oust Rafidah. These are the political risks that Pak Lah has to encounter with guts or be drowned by the barrage of accusations and attacks from his rivals and foes alike. In politics no

saint dares to trudge for fear of being attacked by others. As a veteran leader who has experienced the ups and downs in political destiny many people hope Pak Lah would accept the challenge bravely. He will have to explain to all and sundry the reasons why he appoints Rafidah and not a male politician to fill the deputy's post. The rakyat must be correctly informed by him and both must prove to the people that they make a good and effective pair to lead the country and the party.

Now Pak Lah has to make a great decision. Mahathir had mentioned Najib Tun Razak before in order to bring both personalities together to lead the party and the government. Most likely, Pak Lah will differ from Mahathir's choice for certain reasons known to him. Many observers know both of them, though respecting one another as cabinet ministers, could not work together in one team as premier and deputy premier. He may spring a surprise by appointing Rafidah as his deputy thus bringing shock waves to many aspirants. He must be brave to face the criticism. He must be prepared for the answers why Rafidah is chosen and not another male minister of good standing. He must have the guts to shock the nation with his choice. Some people will provoke him, tease him and chide him for choosing a woman as number two in the government and the party. He must stand firm for what he has done. Never quit. Never give up easily. Like Mahathir he should be daring enough to face anybody, rebut all criticisms once he makes a decision. This is the making of a real leader

who dares to challenge the world in making commitments.

He has nothing to worry about criticism if he chooses the best candidate to help him. He must be brave enough to admit his weaknesses. He cannot hide his weaknesses from the people since he attracts attention in his daily statements on the affairs of the nation. If he makes stupid comments then the people will respond with shock and uproar. If his speech is monotonous, lacks depth and ideas then the response from the people would be lukewarm, uninspiring, stale. The people can make judgments on the politicians and ministers because the politicians in power are chosen by them. They have the right to criticise, to suggest and to give their views without fear or favour.

Of course if he chooses Rafidah as his deputy the people will also focus on Rafidah as much as they follow the daily activities of Abdullah. It would be very interesting for the people to see how the pair manage the country and guide the destiny of the nation and the future of the rakyat. As normal human being Rafidah too has her strengths and weaknesses. Give her a chance to prove her worth like Mahathir giving Abdullah the opportunity to be the number two man now. Let Abdullah and Rafidah plan the future and see whether both can work together to bring about great changes for the betterment of all. It is nothing wrong for a dynamic woman politician like Rafidah to share the power with Abdullah since she is one of the best leaders in the country. Do not belittle Rafidah

because she is a woman. She is much better of than some of the mediocre ministers who fail to give the best leadership, who lack dynamism, positive and creative ideas for their own ministries. The combination of Abdullah and Rafidah will give a good impact on the running of the government if, of course, Abdullah is willing to share the power and the intellectual input plus great experience that Rafidah has. Everything bogs down on the attitude of Abdullah working hand in hand with Rafidah who is widely respected for her intellectual capability and expertise in economics, trade and industries. Rafidah will complement Abdullah in the fields of economics, international trade and industries in order to widen and explore more and new international markets for Malaysian manufactured goods and others.

Abdullah is breaking away from the Malay tradition if he were to appoint Rafidah as his deputy. She has all the credentials of an experienced, matured politician which other male colleagues look with envy. On matters of politics, economy and external trade, Rafidah can be a great boost to Abdullah in charting the country's future as well as UMNO. Though a workaholic, Rafidah is not very ambitious like Najib or Tengku Razaleigh to go for the top leadership. She has her own political and intellectual strength that shape her attitude towards life, work and politics. With her as deputy, Abdullah has no fear of being challenged for the leadership by her. She can be a good advisor to Abdullah, and knowing Rafidah, she is not a betrayer against the leadership or country for she is

not obsessed with power like Anwar.

From her performance as women's leader she is well received and popular among them. In the course of her political adventure only once he was defeated by Dr Siti Zaharah as the leader of Wanita UMNO – the women's wing of UMNO – in 1993 when Anwar was successful in putting most of his supporters in the Supreme Council, the Youth and the Women's movements. Zaharah's leadership was shortlived. In 1996 election of party leadership again the women delegates returned Rafidah back to power until today.

The question is will Abdullah take a political risk appointing Rafidah as his deputy? Has he the guts and determination to push Rafidah in the forefront of UMNO leadership knowing pretty well the chauvinistic and conservative attitudes of the UMNO masses? Though Rafidah is known to give her wholehearted support for Mahathir, yet she is pragmatic enough to ride with the tide when the need arises. The confidence and trust shown by Mahathir is seen by her retention of the international trade portfolio for more than a decade. Her numerous trade missions, contacts and dialogues with other trade and economic ministers of the world help to boost Malaysia's international trade with major countries as well as the third world countries which is in accordance with Mahathir's policy of cooperating and helping to enrich Malaysia's neighbours and trading partners so as to reap mutual benefits for both.

In terms of political experience and economic expertise Rafidah is a great asset to the country and to

Abdullah if he needs a strong, loyal and dedicated leader at his side. Many have rated Rafidah as one of the few very able and experienced ministers in the Mahathir cabinet who outshines the mundane, timid and lusterless members who crowd the cabinet at Putrajaya. If he were to be the future prime minister Abdullah must have a deputy who is an economist, tested with time, very accomplished, dynamic to forge Malaysia forward. Of course he can pick some one from the corporate or the academic world to push him into the cabinet limelight but not as deputy prime minister who will only create controversies and dissensions among UMNO leadership as well as the Barisan Nasional component parties. Abdullah is not considered economic-minded like Mahathir who was quite an expert in monetary and economic matters that baffled the world, drawing adverse criticism and mockery from some western countries and experts when he pegged the Malaysian ringgit at RM3.80 to US1.00 dollar, and controlled the outflow of investment dividends of foreigners in order to stabilise the economy of the country.

If Rafidah were appointed as his deputy, most likely there will be no rumblings among leaders in the Barisan Nasional component parties for every one knows her capability, experience and expertise in economics that help to attract foreign investments into the country. Many consider Rafidah as a great asset to UMNO and Barisan Nasional. It is true that lots of UMNO leaders are too gender conscious and they would make Rafidah the butt of criticism and an

embarrassment to Abdullah. Being a leader known for his long deliberation before making any decision, Abdullah would not make his position challenged or ridiculed by other UMNO leaders. As a former high ranking government officer, schooled in rigid General Orders and discipline it is natural for Abdullah to play safe so as not to incur the wrath and criticism by others. Many are of the opinion Abdullah lacks luster, intellectual sharpness of Mahathir, slow in making decision, and prone to superficiality. His speeches are considered boring, lack depth and monotonous depriving him the awe and adulation of the people as compared to Mahathir or Anwar.

At this juncture there are not many suitable UMNO candidates to be Abdullah's deputy. According to tradition he must pick one of the three vice presidents to be his deputy or, to extent the search further, he could only pick Rafidah whose status is on par with the three elected vice presidents. She has the status, standing and political experience much more superior than most of the other three vice presidents. If Abdullah wants one of the best candidates then he must choose Rafidah and face the brunt of criticism by other dissatisfied UMNO leaders who would go for his blood. Many political observers believe Abdullah would not dare to rock the boat at this stage of his crucial political career to be in the saddle of power, guiding the destiny of his own party, the Barisan Nasional and the country.

Abdullah is facing formidable problems when he takes the place of Dr Mahathir who has transformed

the fortune of the country and the multiracial people of Malaysia so they are recognised and known throughout the world. Malaysia's achievements are synonymous with Mahathir's greatness as a dynamic leader of world class. Abdullah will struggle under the shadow of Mahathir for many years to come if ever he can survive the uphill battles to retain his power, influence and commitments to bring Malaysia to greater height of success. He will retain Rafidah in her present portfolio knowing well she has done tremendous work and achievement in her present position for over a decade. She has made Malaysia known by her grid, determination and experience in economic and trade matters that made her well-respected, awed and feared by some foreign trade ministers. Rafidah has no fear in confronting any foreign leader who tries to bring down the good name of Malaysia in any international forum. She will fight tooth and nail to present Malaysia's interest in international trade circles at all cost though others may shy away from doing so. This is Rafidah's character and her true colour.

Frankly speaking economics is not a strong point of Abdullah. He is not like Mahathir who has the intellectual capacity and knowledge in various fields of management of the country. Therefore Rafidah can give a great boost to a teamwork that will give a solid foundation in the economic management that Abdullah lacks. Rafidah can fill the gap that he lacks, and the combination of the two, if given a chance, will most likely ensure optimism in a new era after Mahathir.

## *Chapter Nine*

# **RAIS YATIM AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

*T*he search for a new deputy prime minister to Pak Lah should not be confined to the present three vice presidents of UMNO. As stated earlier, of the three, Najib Razak seems to be on full throttle to capture the most cherished position as second man to Pak Lah. Both are ambitious, so are their respective wives, yet both are not highly regarded by various segments of the society. Najib clings on to the brittle hope of Mahathir's suggestion that he be given the deputy's post. Hitherto Pak Lah never make any comment pro or contra to his mentor's opinion for fear of negative reactions among his supporters and cronies. Najib, being ambitious and goaded by his ever

ambitious wife, has built up a strong network of support among UMNO's 165 divisions with the ultimate hope of procuring a major share of votes from delegates in the coming UMNO general assembly for the election of new office bearers. Some of Pak Lah's supporters are greatly agitated by various political moves made by Najib and are monitoring every move made by Najib and his supporters.

Every day Najib captures the media attention with various statements made on matters of UMNO politics or national issues. This is to make the people aware of his daily routine, and at the same time, to show to UMNO members and the rakyat that he is a leader to be reckoned with, a leader for all seasons, who are familiar and able to talk on anything under the Malaysian sun. The media, knowing the rivalry between Pak Lah and Najib, give both leaders the space and time for them to outshine one another to capture the attention of the rakyat. Some UMNO leaders who know these two rivals intimately said Najib's henchmen are friendlier and warmer than Pak Lah's gurkhas. Knowing that their boss has an uphill battle to gain the support and votes of UMNO delegates in the coming party's general assembly for the election of Supreme Council members therefore Najib's men make themselves more approachable and amenable in listening to members' requests and problems.

The fear against Najib seems real among Pak Lah's henchmen and hangers-on. I was told that certain politicians who are considered as Pak Lah's supporters

were cautioned and noted by his henchmen if they were seen in the company of Najib or his men. Such reaction reflects lack of confidence and fear of any opposition against their boss whom they consider should be accepted without prejudice or malice. They realise that Pak Lah is chosen by Dr Mahathir alone and had not been elected by the two thousand odd delegates to the UMNO general assembly. Many UMNO leaders had expressed their reservations and protests, though quietly, when UMNO Supreme Council made a decision not to open for contest the post of the president and deputy president in the last UMNO general assembly in 1998. By doing so Pak Lah's position as deputy president was not challenged though I was told at least two leaders were prepared to go against him. Mahathir, of course, would not be challenged by any one because he is the best leader UMNO and Malaysians had ever had, and everybody wants him to retain the leadership. In fact there are certain moves made by some UMNO leaders to persuade Dr Mahathir to continue leading the party and the government, and beg him to withdraw his statement of leaving the center stage of government this October. Such is the love and support shown by UMNO members and the majority of rakyat for the prime minister.

In this predicament, knowing that his future position as prime minister is in jeopardy, Pak Lah has no other alternative except to choose the best candidate as his deputy to help him to chart the destiny of his party and the nation. Once Mahathir leaves

Putrajaya handing over the power to Pak Lah, a member of parliament from Kepala Batas, he has to shoulder the heavy responsibilities to the hilt. He needs some one whom he can rely upon, trust to play the political game well. Without Mahathir as his mentor and protector Pak Lah would be at the mercy of his political rivals who are waiting impatiently in the wings to topple him as UMNO leader. If he makes more blunders from time to time then he would give more rooms to his political enemies to attack him.

So who could come to save his leadership and be of great help as his deputy? Besides Tengku Razaleigh and Rafidah as potential candidates for deputy prime minister's post, who has the charisma, the oomph, rich and colourful political experience and intellectual depth who can help Abdullah as his deputy. Besides these two, Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim has also been mentioned by many groups in UMNO, as well as the corporate circle, as a suitable candidate to be the future deputy prime minister. With good credential as an experienced politician coupled with his doctorate in law, Rais is considered a bright star in the UMNO hierarchy. One cannot deny his vast experience in politics. He was once the menteri besar of Negeri Sembilan for two terms before being pulled to Kuala Lumpur to be deputy minister of home affairs. His rise to power in the cabinet was fast, being promoted to full minister of information and then as minister of foreign affairs.

The battle royal fought between Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh in 1987 saw Rais with Razaleigh's

Team B. When the Kelantan prince formed Parti Melayu Semangat 46, after the dissolution of Old UMNO by the court, Rais was elected to be the deputy president of Semangat 46. Most of the veteran UMNO leaders were with Razaleigh, and they fought tooth and nail in two elections of 1990 and 1995. Unfortunately Semangat 46 did not make much headway. Many of Semangat's leaders including Rais were defeated in two general elections. When finally Tengku Razaleigh made a comeback into UMNO's fold in 1998 and dissolved Semangat 46, Rais like most veteran leaders also returned to UMNO. In the last election Rais was elected as a MP for Jelebu, and appointed as a minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of law. It was during the political adventurism in the opposition party Semangat 46 that Rais went back to England to advance his studies for a doctorate in law.

Rais is well known for his gift of the gab, has a flair for English and Bahasa Melayu alike that made him highly admired by laymen and politicians for his wits and wisdom. He is quick-witted, sharp and very knowledgeable in law. Being a seasoned politician of high stature Rais has good rapport with all segments of the society, well admired and respected by most UMNO leaders and Malaysians in general. He is known as an expert of adat perpatih which he often use in his speeches and which attract great attention of his listeners. Active and forward-looking Rais is considered by many quarters as prime minister's material of the future. Though small in stature yet this

man from Jelebu is bursting with enthusiasm, rich in ideas, which can bring great changes to the society. Though he was once regarded as a bitter critic of Mahathir, yet after rejoining UMNO, Mahathir put aside their past differences and gave Rais a cabinet post in the Prime Minister's Department. Mahathir, known for his love of knowledge, appreciates Rais's intellectual depth and dedication for the party and the people. Most likely Mahathir considers Rais has a bright future in politics, and realizing Rais's potential, grooms him to play greater role in UMNO and the government. Many people are of the opinion that Rais has a great future and worthy to be given a ministerial post in order to tap his talent, experience, knowledge and ideas.

He is multi-talented having experiences as a teacher, lawyer, former menteri besar, deputy minister of home affairs, former minister of information, former minister of foreign affairs and former deputy president of Semangat 46 and today, after returning to UMNO he is given a cabinet post as an appreciation and recognition of his political acumen, experience and expertise in law. His stint as foreign minister gave him the opportunity to appreciate diplomacy in bridging understanding and cooperation among nations of the world. Many consider him as an all-rounder, rich in political experience that many are not privileged to. This man is full of self confidence, is self reliant and very frank in his words when making statements to the press touching on certain issues pertaining to law and order.

Recently Mahathir made a very important statement in Kota Bharu where he called on all UMNO members to change with time, and choose leaders and candidates who are rakyat friendly if UMNO wants to recapture Kelantan and Terengganu from Pas. He also urged UMNO leaders who have reached the height of incompatibility, that is in a state of "political comatose" to give way to younger leaders who are highly educated, dynamic and rich in ideas to bring about social changes in the society. UMNO leaders have realized that the leadership must move with time, to keep abreast with the great social changes of the time that affect and influence the rakyat. Leaders, who are self-centred, lack dynamism and the power to bring social changes to the people, will create animosity and gap between the party in power and the masses. The defeat of UMNO in Terengganu was due to the rakyat's dislike and hatred towards Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar and his cronies who overstayed their welcome, being too long in the saddle of power. The warning signs were obvious to the UMNO leadership that UMNO would lose Terengganu if Wan Mokhtar were to be selected as a candidate in the 1999 election. It was said Wan Mokhtar pleaded with Mahathir to give him "his last chance" to stand again when told that his name was deleted from the list of candidates for Terengganu. Out of sympathy, being a veteran politician who hailed as an ulama (Islamic religious scholar) Mahathir, finally, reinstated his candidature. The rest was history. UMNO was defeated hands down. Only four UMNO candidates won. The rest licked their wounds in shame.

Wan Mokhtar and Datuk Abu Bakar Daud were appointed as ambassadors to Saudi Arabia and Egypt respectively as political have been. Today Datuk Seri Haji Hadi Awang, acting PAS President, also an ulama, has replaced Wan Mokhtar as menteri besar of the state.

The rejection of certain UMNO leaders by the rakyat of Kelantan has taught UMNO bigwigs a bitter lesson in political games with the rakyat. There are too many factions and leaders in Kelantan who claim to be the torch bearers of UMNO, well-respected and bragged about having great followers. There is no unity among them. Each is trying to backstab one another to be the future menteri besar or as ministers at Putrajaya. Pas, on the other hand, stands firm behind Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the Mursyidul Am Pas (the spiritual leader) whose influence among the Kelantanese is unmatched by any Kelantanese UMNO leader. Every one knows PAS government cannot bring material development and progress to the state. But the rakyat stay put with Pas. In the 1990 election when Pas joined forces with Semangat 46 and a few minor Islamic parties, the opposition alliance defeated UMNO 39 seats to zero. Again in 1995 Pas and Semangat 46 trounced UMNO, leaving seven state seats to UMNO and the rest to Pas and Semangat 46. In the last general election of 1999 Pas, without Semangat 46 which dissolved by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who rejoined UMNO with his followers, again mauled UMNO leaving only two state seats for UMNO and the rest to Pas. Three major defeats in the

national elections at the hand of Pas in Kelantan had jolted UMNO leadership to reassess the quality of its leaders in the state that brought bad luck and shame to the party.

Many political observers believe UMNO leadership should be overhauled completely- the dead woods replaced with young, educated, dynamic and dedicated leaders in order to instill confidence and to get support from the rakyat. Some menteri besar chose their cronies and hangers-on to be candidates who were not well accepted as leaders by the people. Many a time divisional heads who were replaced as candidates boycotted their substitutes and sabotaged them. Due to wrong choice of candidates on the part of UMNO in the last election Pas was successful in gaining eight parliamentary seats as well as 12 state seats in Kedah alone. In Pahang PAS managed to grab six state seats, KeADILan and DAP one each. All together PAS managed to gain 27 parliamentary seats and more than a hundred state seats to her credit because of the wrong choice of candidates and the infighting among them.

Looking from the results of last election UMNO must take the leadership problems seriously for fear of being rejected again in the coming election. One cannot deny the great influence of Pas among the Malay- majority states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis, Kedah and Pahang. To put it bluntly Pas is a great threat to UMNO. If UMNO leadership is weak and indecisive in their actions which breed incompetence then the party is going to face bigger and insurmountable problems in the future. If they dare

not replace dead woods among them, too complacent, ignoring the voices for change from the rakyat, or depriving young leaders of bigger roles in the party, then, sad to say, UMNO will face an uphill battle to hold on to power as it is happening now.

Pak Lah is facing a big dilemma in the choice of his deputy to team up with him. If he were to appoint a weak leader to help him in charting the course of action for the government and UMNO, then he will face a bigger problems if both of them fail to win the confidence of the rakyat. People have high expectation from their leadership. They are wise, demanding and they know how to evaluate a good and dynamic leader from a weak and passive one. Therefore do not belittle or under-estimate the judgment of the multiracial Malaysians. Pak Lah cannot fail and undo what Mahathir has done for 22 years as the leader of the government. He must overcome his inferiority complex, do self-criticism and dare to change his attitudes in order to win the hearts and souls of the rakyat. Malaysia, under Mahathir, is considered an international player. Mahathir's fame and unconventional ideas have provoked the world's leaders to take stock of the needs and demands of developing nations. Malaysia has become the spokesman of the oppressed, the dispossessed, the exploited, the weak and the poor nations of the world. In the international forums Malaysia's voice of dissent in championing the cause of developing nations is wellknown and highly respected by all countries. Mahathir's confrontation with George Soros, the Jewish American

billionaire whose foray into the money market in Asia had brought about economic chaos in 1997 and 1998, in Hong Kong made him famous as the architect of Malaysian currency control that shocked and put a halt to money speculators in Malaysian ringgit. By pegging our ringgit at RM3.80 to US1.00 and other monetary controls help Malaysia to lift off from the economic recession faster than any other country in Asia. Though attacked by The World Bank and IMF, which are controlled by America, for defying their advice, Mahathir stubbornly stood firm. With God's grace and Mahathir's courage and creative economic ideas, at last IMF and The World Bank recognised the validity for currency control after seeing the healthy recovery of our economy from recession. The Indonesian, another victim of Soros and the IMF, is still suffering from the trauma of economic recession of 1997 which led to the downfall of Suharto.

Luck alone does not make Malaysia a success. It is the great dynamic leadership of Mahathir and his good advisors that shape the destiny of the country that make all Malaysians proud. One may disagree with some of Mahathir's viewpoints and his style of management yet one cannot deny his great contributions, ideas, commitment and dedications to his work and his leadership qualities that transform the social, economic and political frameworks in the country. This is the kind of leadership Malaysians appreciate and support. This is the challenge faced by Pak Lah and the deputy that he chooses. Failing to achieve the expectation of the people he will face

bigger problems in stabilising his political position and to be accepted by the rakyat. Practising cronyism and nepotism of the highest order will put a stigma to his image as power crazy, self-centred and decadent. The watchful eyes of the rakyat will monitor and evaluate his leadership qualities from time to time to mark his progress for good or for worse. As the rakyat are more highly educated they are exposed to and influenced by numerous trends of thought from all corners of the world. To day's youths are full of idealism and romanticism and very critical of the establishment.

In Malaysia half of the population consists of young men and women who are educated. They want changes for the better in their daily lives, they are easily influenced by outside forces, western cultures and deeply disturbed and emotional at the plight of the Palestinians, the Chechens and other Muslims who are oppressed and killed by the Jews and other oppressive regimes. Many of these youths hate George Bush and the American government as enemies of Islam and American support of Israel's aggression and military adventurism in Palestine is considered as ethnic cleansing. You may relate the great sacrifices and contributions of the forefathers in their fight for Malaysian independence. Yes they recognized and respect their forefathers but it does not mean they will condone nepotism, abuse of power, injustice and amassing of great wealth by the selected, privileged few. They are very vocal in expressing their views and would not hesitate to criticize and reject politicians of low caliber, of superficial intellect, lack dynamism

and constructive ideas to chart the course of history for the good of the majority. Pak Lah, in his search for a suitable deputy, must take into consideration the challenges of the time and the aspirations of the people especially the educated youth of today. Never indulge in promoting nepotism and favouritism that will rear ugly heads of hatred among the educated. Many leaders have succumbed to nepotism and favouritism and finally driven out of office in ignominy and shame. The legendary Suharto with family interests that gobbled up most of the national wealth of Indonesia should be a good lesson for other leaders not to emulate the decadent power crazy of the former general. In fact there are too many decadent and corrupted leaders in the world that littered the pages of history. Pak Lah must take heed and listen to the voices of the rakyat. Being a son of an famous *ulama* in Penang and majored in Islamic Studies at University Malaya one expects him to be more sober, careful, tactful, and not be swayed by close advisors who have personal agenda of their own that would affect and destroy his credibility as the future prime minister.

The people are weary and worried of undercurrent turbulence in UMNO politics knowing Mahathir will no longer be the premier. Pak Lah's meteoric rise to power in UMNO and the government is made possible by Mahathir's fear that UMNO would fall into the hands of certain leaders who are pro West, flamboyant and lack Islamic principles. Mahathir believes UMNO must be the dominating political party in Barisan Nasional and the leader of the government. He never

entertain the thought that UMNO would one day be in the opposition. Once UMNO loses its political power then the position and fate of the Malays would be in danger. Thus the future of the Malays is with UMNO and not Pas or any other party. UMNO must be the bastion of Malay nationalism with its deep root in Islam. Islam to UMNO is moderate, liberal and upholder of knowledge. The power of knowledge will be the greatest driving force that creates and nurtures civilizations, technological and scientific advancement in the development for humanity. The Malays, being the majority of the population of Malaysia, need a strong, intellectual leader of Mahathir's stature to bring about social reforms and political will to change the course of history for the good of the country and her people. With this in mind Mahathir stoops at nothing to change the history of this country and the important role played by Malays in UMNO. From an agricultural backwardness leapfrogging into the new challenging world of multimedia super corridor, turning Malaysia into an industrial country by Vision 2020. There is no looking back except to go forward.

Such big strides in development and progress brought about by Mahathir must be kept in momentum. He, Abdullah, must strive hard to prove to the nation, as protégé of Mahathir, that he is capable to steer the ship into storms and tidal waves to reach the port of call successfully. Of course he is not the clone of Mahathir. As it is many people believe Abdullah cannot handle the affairs of the nation and UMNO plus Barisan Nasional as good and as effective

as Mahathir. Mahathir has the resilience, charisma, intellectual depth and courage that none could match. People are used to Mahathir's style of leadership, accepted and proud of him.

After Anwar's debacle, Abdullah tries to soft paddle his ways around waiting for the time when he is really at the throttle as prime minister. He fears to make any move that would raise Mahathir's eyebrow or that would be deliberately interpreted as against Mahathir by his political foes. Within this ten months before Mahathir's voluntary retirement as prime minister, Abdullah has become the focus of attention by various interested groups especially the corporate sector and politicians from all shades. The NGOs and other concerned groups would study his every move and statement in order to know and understand the character and dynamism, if any, of this man.

Though friendly and warm with ordinary rakyat as well as with UMNO men, many quarters are doubtful of his capability to lead the country. This lingering doubt will haunt the people for a long time after he becomes the prime minister for fear if he fails to perform beyond peoples' expectation. In order to deny any adverse and negative opinions among the people regarding his ability Abdullah must have a dynamic and well-respected deputy prime minister that would mould the pair into a strong and effective leadership. Of course the deputy must play a second fiddle to the chief, and not pose a danger to the position of number one. Tunku Abdul Rahman Al-Haj had a very loyal and dedicated deputy, Tun Razak, who

played his role as second in command superbly without making the leader to have sleepless nights or fearing any hidden agenda of his second man. When Mahathir was deputy to Tun Hussein Onn he too played low key without showing any signal of trying to overthrow his boss. Unfortunately Anwar Ibrahim was seen to be too hasty and too power hungry in toppling Mahathir that led to his downfall with ignominy. Abdullah, always conscious of being number two, tries to steer away from any form of confrontation with Mahathir. In fact he is too fearful of making decision that would incur bad blood between him and his mentor.

Knowing skepticism on the part rakyat of his ability to be number one Abdullah has no choice except to appoint someone as his deputy that will appeal to the rakyat. He may have someone in mind that suits his political confort but he must be sure that the deputy of his choice can meet the people's expectation and goal. If he were to choose Dr Rais Yatim as his deputy they would make a good and effective team to lead the government and the party. Rais and Abdullah can complement one another to pave the way for greater impact in managing the country, and at the same time, to bring Malaysia to greater heights at the international level. None of them can outshine Mahathir, but the combination of the two would form a strong pair in leadership for the country. People, too, realized Mahathir's leadership is hard to find, very few among the best leaders of the world. Though Abdullah is Mahathir's choice, not the rakyat, yet the people are

willing to go along with Mahathir's selection though with certain reservations. By appointing Rais as his deputy, Abdullah helps to strengthen his political position giving more confidence to his leadership. Rais has the oomph to give confidence to the rakyat for he has been tested, encountered storms and stress, tasted failures and success in his pursuit for political power. He is considered the right guy to build a strong team with Pak Lah in leading the party, Barisan Nasional and the government.

Rais is a man with strong principles, willing to take risks in the pursuit of power when in the opposition. Like Mahathir and Musa Hitam, who were expelled from UMNO for their strong anti Tengku Abdul Rahman's stand on National Language as well as power sharing with other non Malays, Rais, too, took the plunge to be with Tengku Razaleigh in Semangat 46 and challenged Mahathir in two elections. Semangat 46 failed to dislodge Mahathir and UMNO as the ruling party, had to be dissolved and their leaders and members returned to UMNO. Leaders like Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Rais, in particular, know hardships, risks and failures that accompany them in their struggle for power as an opposition. They know intimately political booby traps, treachery and promises made and broken among the opposition parties. The bittersweet memories, frustrations and hardships being in the opposition have taught Rais and other ex members of Semangat 46 that only UMNO should represent the Malays in power sharing with other races in the country. Though at one

time Mahathir was their enemy number one, the man that brought the demise of the Old UMNO, yet, when the time comes for them to realize the hopelessness of their struggle, these leaders were willing to dissolve Semangat 46 and accept Mahathir as their own leader. This is the sign of courage, big-hearted and sincerity in their politic struggles to preserve Malay unity.

It can be said former Semangat 46 leaders who rejoin UMNO are not power crazy as to bulldoze their way into the political mayhem thus creating unnecessary tensions and suspicion on the part of other members who are clawing their way to grab various positions in the government or party. Tengku Razaleigh, for example, is a well-respected veteran leader who has large followers in the party. Yet, when rejoining UMNO, he is willing to be an ordinary member without pushing himself to be appointed as a cabinet minister. He is willing to be an UMNO "gurkha" for the sake of UMNO unity. Everyone knows and acknowledges Razaleigh as a prime minister's material who has vision and foresight. Today his political fortune is at a lower level but like a Malay saying *walaupun jatuh ke tanah tapi misainya tak mencicah bumi lagi* which means that even though he is down now yet he is not out. There is still hope and opportunity for him to be an important leader in the future. Of course Tengku Razaleigh and Rais were considered the best pair to lead the country if Semangat 46 were to win the election then. Both have the intellectual strength, charisma and well respected and admired by the Malays and also the non Malays too.

In fact some observers are of the opinion Tengku Razaleigh and Rais will make a good pair to go for number one and number two posts in the coming election of Supreme Council members in order to give great positive and dynamic impact in the running of the country and UMNO.

Man proposes Allah disposes. The ideal pair of Razaleigh-Rais did not materialize. Abdullah, who was indecisive to plunge himself fully to join Team B during the battle royal of Razaleigh vs Mahathir in UMNO election of 1987, finally, out of the blue, is destined to be the future prime minister while Razaleigh, the former leader of Semangat 46, is in the political limbo while reflecting on his political fate as an ordinary MP cum as head of UMNO division in Gua Musang, Kelantan. Rais, on the other hand, is fortunate that Pas does not pose a danger to UMNO's survival. Further more the UMNO leaders and members in Jelebu division all support Rais to be their divisional leader, with the hope the Jelebu son would one day be the future deputy prime minister, or with Allah's blessing, as future prime minister.

UMNO politics in Negeri Sembilan is considered quite tame and mellow when compared to the infighting of their counterparts in Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Kedah, Perak as well as Selangor. Isa Samad, menteri besar of Negeri Sembilan, was picked from nowhere to take over the menteri besar's post from Rais in 1982 when he was promoted to be the cabinet minister in Kuala Lumpur. It was Rais who chose Isa, a former unknown teacher,

to be in the saddle of power in Seremban. Isa knows without Rais's help he would be in the political wilderness as a mere state assemblyman without much power but full of dreams. When Rais was with Semangat 46, Isa took the opportunity to put his cronies and hangers-on in various UMNO divisions, and at the same time, trying to strengthen his political rein in the state so as to make himself indispensable to the UMNO leadership.

Isa knows he is nowhere compared to Rais who has great political acumen, a highly educated lawyer and a man with great influence in the state as well as in the country. When Rais rejoined UMNO and being accepted with open arms by Jelebu division head, Datuk Yunus Rahmat, who relinquished his position to give way to Rais, Isa realises his days as menteri besar are numbered. Compared to Tengku Razaleigh, Rais is more fortunate because infighting among UMNO leaders in Negeri Sembilan is not as serious as in Kelantan. Only Isa is the stumbling block to eclipse Rais's rise to power and influence in the state. Credit should be given to Isa too, though considered an upstart and a leader without much substance and intellect, yet he managed to return Barisan Nasional to power with big majority leaving DAP gasping for breath, and Pas losing steam to fight UMNO. With Rais as a charismatic leader of the state, many observers believe, Barisan Nasional will retain its power, and UMNO leadership will be strengthened further without Isa.

Rais is distinguished in law and considered a

prominent well-respected politician. Starting as a language teacher, trained at Maktab Perguruan Bahasa (Language Institute) but later took up law obtaining LL.B degree with honours from University of Singapore in 1973, followed with a master's degree in Comparative Law. In the same year, he was accepted as an advocate and solicitor at the High Court, Malaysia. In 1991 he took up M. Phil in law at King's College, London University. After three years, in 1994, he obtained Ph.D in Public Law from the same university. This Kampung Gagu Jelebu boy has vast experience in state and national politics that put him as one of the leading forefront leaders in the country. In 1978-1982 he was appointed as menteri besar of Negeri Sembilan. Before that he was made parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (1974-76); deputy minister of law (1976-77). Before becoming menteri besar he was appointed as deputy minister of home affairs. In 1978 Rais was pulled to Kuala Lumpur to be made minister in the Ministry of Land and Regional Development (1982-84); minister of information (1984-85), and as foreign minister (1985-87). After 1987 Tengku Razaleigh along with Rais and thousands of UMNO members bade farewell to UMNO and formed Parti Semangat Melayu 1946 in order to rekindle the genuine Malay nationalism of 1946 after the old UMNO was declared illegal by the High Court.

In his search for political strength, power and the pursuit of Malay nationalism Rais, like all leaders of Semangat 46, had to encounter the ups and downs of

political game especially as opposition leaders. Bitterness, treachery, frustrations, broken hopes, empty dreams, all combined to crowd their minds. But the Semangat 46 men, being ex UMNO members, never shirk in their fight for Malay unity, transparency and justice for all. Their love for their race, Islam and country never fade. They fight against UMNO Baru, initiated by Mahathir, because they felt Mahathir had made UMNO Baru as his political vehicle to strengthen his power base after the battle royal of 1987 which he narrowly defeated Razaleigh by mere 41 votes! That narrow victory shook Mahathir to the bone because never in the history of UMNO the battle for the presidency an incumbent won with a slim margin. A victory is a victory. Mahathir won the day and the battle for power between Mahathir and Razaleigh and Semangat 46 stretched for two more elections of 1990 and 1995. The battle for power was vicious, serious and deadly. Unfortunately the political tide was against Razaleigh, Rais and the lot of Semangat 46 members. They fought against Mahathir and UMNO to win the support of the Malays. However, UMNO under Mahathir is monolithic, invincible against all attacks from the opposition. Mahathir, like any other leader, has his weaknesses too. But people, from various strata of multiracial society, see in Mahathir as the saviour of the nation, the protector of all citizens and a social and political leader par excellence. To fight against the champion of the people, the pride of the nation is useless, making them the mockery and the butt of attack by the people themselves. Mahathir, on his part,

showed his magnanimous spirit by accepting all members of Semangat 46 without conditions into UMNO. Though Rais had "burned the bridge" behind him yet, the magnanimity shown by Mahathir towards Semangat 46 made them proud to serve under the present prime minister.

In politics there is no permanent enemy, neither permanent friends. The acceptance of Rais, a former deputy president of Semangat 46, as a cabinet minister is a symbol of warm friendship, respect and honour bestowed by Mahathir towards those who were once his political enemies. Even though Razaleigh was not made a cabinet minister Mahathir never marginalize him but appointed him to be a member of UMNO Supreme Council, and in the last election, was made the chairman of State UMNO Liaison Committee of Kelantan. A number of ex Semangat 46 were appointed to the cabinet such as Datuk Zainal Abidin Zin, Datuk Tengku Azlan Sultan Abu Bakar and others. Now all of them are under one room with a common goal. One must not deny the former Semangat 46 members the opportunity to play more important role in the party as well as the government because they never deviate from the objectives of UMNO. They are part and parcel of UMNO, sink or swim with UMNO, the Malays and Islam. The voice of dissent is inculcated in Islam as well as in UMNO. None must deny the right to oppose for a good cause, for the benefit of the Malays, Islam and the country. Tengku Razaleigh, Rais and hundreds of thousands of former Semangat 46 men and women who rejoin UMNO on their own

accord did so with good intention for the sake of Malay unity and the future of Malay political power. There was no regret, no malice on their part. The spirit of UMNO is in their blood, warm and challenging – the product of Malay nationalism which is deeply ingrained in Islam. All UMNO members have an equal share and opportunity to be leaders at all levels in the party as long as they get the majority support of the members.

As an experienced politician with a doctorate in law Rais can work hand in hand with Abdullah to plan great achievements for the country and the people. Two minds, complementing each other in the pursuit of power can bring about greater progress and prosperity to the nation and her people. With Rais as his teammate Abdullah would find a loyal and helpful friend who can help to strengthen his position as the national leader, and simultaneously planning for an effective leadership for the future. At this stage Abdullah has no alternative except to find someone who can help to boost and legitimize his leadership of the party and as the head of the government. With Rais as his deputy and advisor Abdullah will be in a better position and more comfortable to face all challenges from within and outside.

The big question is can Abdullah accept some one who is considered a prime minister's material as his deputy? Will he be suspicious of every move made by Rais? Does he harbour certain inferiority complex when compared to Rais's academic credentials and political acumen? Rais has a flair for Bahasa Melayu

which he skillfully used with Minangkabau sayings that made Rais very eloquent, captivating and capturing the attention of his audience. With good delivery, a style of his own, Rais is considered one of the best speakers among Malay politicians. Compared to Abdullah, Rais can arrest the attention of his audience much better than Abdullah himself. Abdullah's speeches are considered by many as too monotonous, lacks depth and without much spark to ignite the imagination from the audience. If he is too concerned of his political survival and wants some one whom he considers "second rate" in leadership, then of course, Rais is not the right partner as his deputy. But if puts UMNO and national interest above his personal gains then Rais is the right man as deputy prime minister.

The fact that Rais failed to win a seat in UMNO Supreme Council does not mean he is a leader of no substance. Not all members of the Supreme Council are of high calibre. Many people know some of them won the seats on money politics. They are not fit to be included in the UMNO top echelon for they themselves are known to be failures or ineffective leaders in the party. Abdullah himself must realize he owes the deputy presidency of UMNO because the posts of president and deputy president were not to be contested so as to preserve stability in the party. That was the decision made by members of UMNO Supreme Council in the party election of 2000. That saved Abdullah from being challenged by a couple of leaders who were after the deputy president's post.

One may argue that Rais is not one of the vice presidents of UMNO. Therefore he is not eligible to be appointed as deputy prime minister. That argument does not carry weight since a precedent had been created by the party.

Let us study how Abdullah was given the post of deputy prime minister and with it as deputy president of UMNO. First of all let us study the history how how Mahathir was selected to be the deputy prime minister when Hussein Onn was promoted to the prime ministership after the death of Tun Razak in London. It was said Hussein Onn wanted to choose Tan Sri Ghazali Shafiee, then minister of home affairs, as his deputy. King Ghaz, the nickname given to Ghazali, was also a member of UMNO Supreme Council. Knowing Hussein was in favour of King Ghaz, the three vice presidents at that time namely Ghafar Baba, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Mahathir Mohamad protested to Tun Hussein that, according to UMNO tradition, Hussein should appoint one of them as his deputy. Hussein, sensing his mistake and political problems that would ensue, finally, selected Mahathir who had the third highest votes among the three vice presidents. In fact a precedent was created when Mahathir, the third vice president, was chosen as deputy prime minister on the expense of Ghafar Baba who obtained the highest votes as vice president of UMNO. It was said there was an unwritten and gentlemanly understanding between Mahathir and Razaleigh, the second highest vote getter, that Mahathir should be the deputy prime minister and

Razaleigh would be waiting at the corridor of power to mark his time when Mahathir becomes the prime minister. After Mahathir becoming prime minister after Hussein Onn retired from politics Tengku Razaleigh had to tussle with Musa Hitam for the deputy president's post in 1981. He lost to Musa who was appointed as deputy prime minister when he won the deputy president's post leaving Razaleigh high and dry.

Now Mahathir had appointed Abdullah as deputy prime minister after sacking Anwar Ibrahim. Abdullah was one of the vice presidents of UMNO, obtaining second highest votes for the post. Mahathir did not choose Najib Tun Razak, the highest vote ranking vice president, to be his deputy. There were rumblings and restlessness among some UMNO members and leaders who were not happy at the choice of Abdullah as deputy prime minister. They felt that there were other leaders who were more suitable to be the number two man. Knowing there would be political infighting that would weaken UMNO leadership therefore the Supreme Council made a resolution to deny the position of the president and deputy president to be challenged. Of course none would challenge Mahathir for everyone supported him. In fact that resolution was made to save Abdullah from being challenged by others. Many UMNO leaders believe if deputy presidency was open for competition Abdullah, most likely, would be defeated by his rival. In order words, Mahathir has to protect Abdullah because he knows Abdullah is not well accepted by most UMNO

members.

It also means that Abdullah was given the post of deputy president of the party without having the endorsement of the UMNO delegates. Previously Musa or Anwar had to compete for the post. After winning then only they were made as deputy prime minister of the country. The endorsement from the delegates is cardinal important as an acknowledgement that the candidate has the blessing of the party representatives thereby giving legitimacy to the person concerned. The election of office bearers must be done democratically. At present Abdullah's position as deputy president is not yet approved by the delegates. Even though at one time Mahathir and Anwar's positions as president and deputy president were retained without being contested, that decision was made by the Supreme Council after they had already won their positions through an open contest before. Previously the Supreme Council, being the highest policy making body of UMNO, never gave any endorsement to a person holding the post of deputy president without first of all going through the process of open competition. In other words, Abdullah was appointed as deputy prime minister by Mahathir who indirectly also offered him the position of deputy president of the party without having to undergo the normal democratic choice by the delegates. The Supreme Council, on its part, made a resolution to endorse Abdullah as deputy president without giving the opportunity to the delegates to make their own choice of a deputy president. This action on the part

of the Supreme Council was considered improper, unjustified and undemocratic.

This is a bad precedent created by the Supreme Council by abusing its power denying the party representatives to choose the best candidate for the job. Temporarily Abdullah can survive in Mahathir's cocoon. What will happen to him when Mahathir left the stage and he has to be the main character in the political game? Can he plan his political destiny to be accepted and recognized as the best leader for the country after Mahathir? Can he stop others from plotting to topple him for the presidency in the coming UMNO election? Will he listen to others for good advice and tips for his own success? Will he choose the best candidate for deputy prime minister or chosen someone who is considered weak, colourless and a blind follower who dances to his tune? .

A big problem is looming after the departure of Mahathir this coming October. None of the three vice presidents can be considered to be his deputy for they have too many misgivings that would weaken UMNO leadership further. Neither anyone from the Supreme Council could be considered as a deputy prime minister material with the exception of Tengku Razaleigh and Rafidah. Therefore Abdullah must have the courage and the moral strength to select someone from UMNO members of Parliament, some one outside the Supreme Council, who is considered very experienced, highly educated, dynamic and without scandals that would mar the image of the leadership to be number two man. Rais is one of the candidates

that is outside the Supreme Council that can be considered for the post. He has all the ingredients of a great leader for the party as well as the government. He is one of the best candidates who will get the endorsement of the party and also the people without much difficulty.

This is his biggest dilemma to uphold his position in the party as well the government. There is no short cut to be a leader of repute, acceptable by the people. Mahathir himself had to face various challenges and criticism in order to be accepted and be what he is today. When Tengku Razaleigh clashed with Musa Hitam for deputy president of UMNO's post in 1981 both were considered of equal standing, in intellectual stature, political acumen and support among party members. These two men are still considered prime minister material, and either one of them is acceptable by the majority of UMNO members and the rakyat alike. They have built up their reputation as leaders for decades and being acknowledged by all quarters so much so Razaleigh only lost with mere ten votes to Musa Hitam! The quality of leadership of Mahathir, Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh then became the talk of the time, household words of approval by many. Unfortunately Musa Hitam had left the hurly-burly politics of UMNO to other leaders preferring to be an ordinary citizen to rekindle and nurturing the good and the bad memories of his days as deputy prime minister cum deputy president of UMNO. Only Tengku Razaleigh is still toying with the dream of becoming the future deputy prime minister, or going

bust, trying to challenge Abdullah for the presidency of UMNO in the coming party election. Abdullah, unfortunately, is not considered in the class of Mahathir, Musa and Razaleigh to push his luck on his own steam. He has to be protected, given a certain period of time as deputy prime minister to equip himself intellectually in handling great power and responsibility as future prime minister.

He needs a very good and able deputy that can help to play a bigger and more important role internationally besides uplifting the standard of living of the people. He is no match to face other adversaries and political giants from some countries. Though having decades of experience as a member of the administrative and diplomatic corp before involvement in UMNO yet the people still harbour doubts of his ability as a future prime minister. This is his greatest problem when UMNO leadership has failed to produce the best leaders to take place after Mahathir's departure. At this juncture, after Mahathir there are only three very able leaders to be in the saddle of power, namely Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Dr Rais Yatim and Rafidah Aziz. In order to break the jinx in UMNO leadership after Mahathir a new breed of UMNO leaders, the best among party members, must be elected to lead the party and the government. No one should be protected to preserve and maintain his position through the resolutions made by the Supreme Council. All party positions must be open for competition. No one is above the spirit of UMNO's constitution. They must be democratically elected,

chosen and approved by all the delegates. The coming elected members of UMNO Supreme Council would play very important role indeed in charting the destiny of the Malays, Islam and the nation as a whole.

If UMNO delegates choose mediocre, corrupted, scandal-rich candidates as their leaders of tomorrow then they must be prepared to face the rejection of the rakyat in future elections. If the delegates are easily corrupted, offering their precious votes to corrupted candidates who play money politics, then, they themselves should be blamed if mediocre and well-known leaders of money politics were given another lease of life by the corrupted men and women of UMNO themselves.

## *Chapter Ten*

# **PRIME MINISTER IN TRANSIT?**

**I**f everything goes as Mahathir planned it, come October Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will take over the leadership of UMNO as well as becoming the fifth prime minister of Malaysia. Many perceive the national election, the eleventh after independence, would be held some time after October when Mahathir bids farewell to Putrajaya and be an ordinary citizen like you and me. Being in the seat of power Abdullah, untested for his skill in overcoming major national issues before, has to face all party problems, be it UMNO or any component party of Barisan Nasional. He will be judged, favourably or otherwise, by all political leaders especially UMNO.

Whether he wants to admit it or not, he has to face many political problems in his own party. There are some factions that do not favour him to be the deputy prime minister what more as the prime minister of the country. Like hungry tigers they are waiting patiently for Abdullah to make political blunders or making wrong decisions that would damage his reputation or his leadership.

Abdullah must have strong rein over UMNO to strengthen his position as acting president after Mahathir's retirement this October. Only the endorsement from UMNO general assembly would put Abdullah safely as the new president of the party or, if the tide is against him, most likely a new president would be installed instead. Therefore it is not sure whether Abdullah will get endorsement or not bearing in mind his present position as deputy president of UMNO itself was not open for contest for fear of backlash from some ambitious contenders for the post. To Mahathir, Abdullah is the best among the lot in UMNO, thus singled him out from political wilderness anointed him as deputy prime minister cum deputy president of UMNO. Such honour bestowed by Mahathir is beyond his dream for this "Mr Clean", nickname given to him by some sources, who has never thought of becoming deputy prime minister and now as successor to Mahathir for the prime minister's post. In fact many believe if Anwar Ibrahim were to be the prime minister Abdullah's days in the cabinet would be numbered, and most likely ostracized from the mainstream UMNO politics.

Mahathir believes Abdullah could carry on with his Vision 2020 and other reforms made by him as part and parcel of Abdullah's future plans for the party and the country. Leaving Mahathir's cocoon, unprotected from all kinds of criticism and challenges from his rivals in the party, Abdullah has to show that he is a very effective and able leader to steer the destiny of the country and be leader to be reckoned with. Though he owes his position to Mahathir yet he must get the endorsement and approval of UMNO general assembly to make his position more secured. This is not an easy thing to do. The number of ambitious leaders in UMNO will make it more difficult for Abdullah to woo the majority of the delegates to his cause. Money politics, dirty and unethical, is still rampant. Those ambitious leaders who are known for their money politics will spread the "gifts" generously and in big amounts to ensure their victory and the defeat of Abdullah.

In previous UMNO elections of office bearers Abdullah was said not using money. Many of his supporters claimed he does not believe in money politics. He leaves everything to Allah and the delegates to elect him or to push him out of the leadership mainstream. The question is if many of the candidates for UMNO Supreme Council use money to gain votes and support do you think Abdullah will survive and be elected to be the president of UMNO without Mahathir's blessing? He has to win the presidency if he were to be the prime minister of the country. Since merdeka the prime minister must come

from UMNO and the candidate for the post must be the president of the party. Besides the candidate must be an elected member of parliament. To retain as member of parliament Kepala Batas in the coming national election is no sweat for him. No one can challenge him at Kepala Batas, his own bastion since active in UMNO.

But to win the hearts and souls of 165 UMNO divisional heads is not an easy task knowing well that other rivals, like Najib Tun Razak, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, for one, have considerable influence among them. Also those who idolize Anwar Ibrahim, a staunch foe of Abdullah, would prefer to give their votes to Abdullah's rivals rather than to him. Those who become Mahathir's ardent supporters will reserve their votes and given to other rivals if Abdullah does not offer certain "goodies" to them. But one must not deny that political opportunists of various shades unashamedly will bargain for certain "goodies" with Abdullah and his rivals for their support and votes. Such are the political games in UMNO. Though money politics is a taboo, enshrined in the party constitution, however no one can curb "the axis of evil". It has become a culture that will weaken UMNO leadership if this "axis of evil" is not rooted out. The big question is will Abdullah play money politics too to win votes and survive as the elected leader? If he does, then, people will question his credibility as "Mr Clean". Most likely he will not exchange money and favour with the delegates to obtain precious votes from them. In that case people will applaud his principle

but can he wins the majority votes based on his "Mr Clean" image? He must remember he was defeated to retain the vice president's post in 1993 because he could not fulfill the needs of most delegates, that is, a vote for a price. He came back into the fold, securing a second highest votes for the vice president post, when the delegates were swayed by Mahathir's speech condemning money politics. That was history how he survives in the turbulent culture of money politics until today.

Money politics will haunt every leader and delegate alike. Some would be willing to sacrifice principles and ethics to win their positions in the UMNO Supreme Council, and especially the post of president and deputy president which will guarantee them the positions as future prime minister and deputy prime minister provided they are also elected members of parliament. Abdullah, as acting president when Mahathir bids farewell to Putrajaya, will have to play his cards well in order to win the support of the delegates. Now there is a move to rejuvenate the party by giving more opportunities to young and educated leaders to become candidates in the coming election as well as heads of UMNO divisions. Many of the old leaders, majority of them are considered as dead woods, have to be replaced by younger people in order to win in the coming election and to retake Kelantan and Terengganu from Pas. At least two menteri besar, Adnan Yaakob of Pahang and Tajol Rosli of Perak, had indicated that they and the lot of exco members would be willing to step down to give way for younger

and more dedicated leaders to take their place. Mahathir, on returning from Davos recently, made a suggestion for all leaders to resign giving Abdullah the opportunity to select his own men and women as candidates as well as leaders at divisional and state level. However such suggestion, though good, will not be taken seriously by all and sundry. Many will fight tooth and nail to retain their positions. There will be upheavals and instability in UMNO if Abdullah were to select his own cronies and hangers-on as candidates or as heads of divisions. His rivals will make sure that their positions as well as their cronies too would be entrenched, and that they too want a bigger say in the running of the party. As acting president, after Mahathir left the seat of power, Abdullah will definitely has a bigger say in the choice of candidates for election and also getting his men to be new heads of UMNO divisions. As party leader he can use his influence to get his men to be candidates as well as heads of divisions. But, if he miscalculates or chooses men and women of shady records and of doubtful ability as candidates or heads of divisions, then he will face great problems to rebuild the dented image of UMNO. Or if his chosen candidates fail to win seats, and UMNO lost many more seats in the coming election than in 1999, then he will be the focus of attack by all quarters. If not properly handled, many observers said, Abdullah's position as prime minister and acting president of UMNO would be in great jeopardy.

As stated earlier Abdullah has always being

protected by Mahathir in his rise to power. Of course he was successful in defending his position as one of the vice presidents before Anwar Ibrahim became the darling of Mahathir with such mercurial rise in UMNO and the government so much so it created animosities among leaders that were not in Anwar's camps. Consolidating his position and that of his cronies Anwar, finally, gave a blow to Abdullah in 1993 UMNO election when he lost his seat as one of the vice presidents. When Mahathir was threatened by Anwar's obsession for power in 1997, after Malaysia and other Asian countries were in the depth of economic recession due to George Soros, considered as a "robber" by Mahathir, then Abdullah's political fortune took a new turning. His loyalty to Mahathir and dedication to UMNO have won the day, and after Anwar's dismissal, Mahathir gave him more important role as the deputy prime minister cum deputy president of UMNO. There were talks and whispers at the corridor of power that no deputy prime minister would have the opportunity to be the future prime minister as long as Mahathir does not relinquish his post voluntarily. Musa Hitam, Ghafar Baba and Anwar Ibrahim were left in the limbo as deputy prime minister playing second fiddle to Mahathir so much so Musa and Anwar, in particular, had to challenge Mahathir to wrestle power from him. The challenge made by Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam against Mahathir in 1987 was traumatic enough that led to the establishment of UMNO Baru and the desolution of Old UMNO by the High Court. Later the conspiracy

and plot to topple Mahathir by Anwar and his foreign friends became the last straw that broke the camel's back. UMNO setback in the 1999 election was due to a greater extent the cause celebrity of Anwar's black eye that blackened the image of Mahathir and UMNO. Realising his own mistakes, that is, that no deputy prime minister would survive to take his place, made Mahathir to choose Abdullah as his successor. After Anwar's dismissal Mahathir has to protect Abdullah from any political offensive for fear of undermining Abdullah's fragile position as his deputy. After Mahathir, on his own accord told the rakyat in his emotional speech in UMNO general assembly 2002 that he would bade farewell to Putrajaya, the seat of power, this October the whole nation was taken aback, shocked and pleaded with him to reconsider his decision. Once making his decision there is no turning back. He has made up his mind to put Pak Lah as his successor. Another lucky stroke for Pak Lah when Mahathir will call a day for his voluntary retirement as prime minister. At last Mahathir finds a successor that he feels confident of carrying on his good work and vision to turn Malaysia into a dynamic, industrialized country by the year 2020.

At this hour lady luck is with Pak Lah. If not for three ordinary human beings, one a writer by the name of Khalid Jafri who wrote the controversial book **50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM** and another gutsy young lady, Ummi Hafilda Ali who exposed and accused Anwar of being a homosexual, and Wan Azizah's former driver, Azizan, who admitted having

homosexual relationships with the former deputy prime minister. If not for the sacrifice made by these three courageous individuals most likely Pak Lah would not enjoy the privilege and power as deputy prime minister today. Those in power must not deny the important role of these three humble people who helped to turn the history with the downfall of Anwar. Their love for Mahathir and UMNO drove them to expose Anwar's scandal though knowing the risks that they faced by their actions. There were being harassed, spat upon, hurled abuses by those who were against Mahathir and supporters of Anwar. With such threat and terror they never gave up, stood firm for the cause of UMNO. Today, these ordinary men and woman become forgotten souls, neglected and left to fend for their own destinies.

Mahathir has set the pace and future plan that are hard to beat. The rakyat are used to Mahathir's decisive actions, his vision and his intellectual sharpness that win the respect and awe among friends and foes alike. Pak Lah, for one, has to be in tempo with his mentor in making fast and decisive decisions in order to instill confidence and trust by the people. He must be aware that without having good, experienced and matured advisors on politics, economy, education, religion and etc he is bound to encounter various problems later on. Some people are saying he relies more on opinions from some close members of his family rather than outsiders who are well-known in various disciplines that would enlighten Pak Lah in the course of his actions. Any hint of nepotism would be readily

exploited by those who have an axe to grind, or in case of political rivals, will cultivate any issue that would help to push his cause to tarnish Pak Lah.

People have been whispering among UMNO members that Pak Lah, whether on his own accord or by the wishes of the UMNO Youth chief, helped to push his son-in-law, Khairi Jamaluddin, as an appointed exco member of UMNO Youth. Azalina, the Puteri UMNO chief, on her own accord, nominated Pak Lah's daughter as an exco member of Puteri UMNO citing her expertise is highly required in the movement. One can deduce why Pak Lah's daughter and his son-in-law were appointed exco members. Knowing that Pak Lah would be the future prime minister certain leaders in the party take the opportunity to pave the way for their future success in the party if they play their cards well, and know how to butter their bread. Mahathir's son, Mokhzani, was once an appointed exco member of UMNO Youth during Zahid Hamidi's time and made a treasurer of the movement. He was also the Youth chief of Merbok division in Kedah. When Mahathir was criticised from various sides accusing him of building a political dynasty, he at last, asked his son to relinquish all political posts in UMNO and only concentrate on his businesses. Mahathir, for one, does not want to create political dynasty knowing well nepotism and favouritism cannot make a leader powerful, strong and love by the rakyat. Suharto practised nepotism and favouritism to the hilt, putting members of his family and cronies to various positions in the government

and the business sector. For 32 years he ruled with an iron hand, but finally, the will of the Indonesian people, like tidal waves, drove him from office. Today the strong man from Jalan Cendana is in ruin, sick, cursed, neglected and powerless.

Pak Lah must be aware too that the grand feast for his daughter's wedding in Kepala Batas with an invitation over 50,000 people, slaughtering over 20 heads of cattle, had raised eyebrows among UMNO leaders and the general public. Many people were questioning how come Pak Lah having such a big feast, using the Bertam stadium to house the thousands of invited guests from far and near, when as "Mr Clean", and not considered a millionaire, could afford such extravagance? They compare Pak Lah's wedding extravaganza for his daughter with Mahathir's wedding feast for his sons which, they claimed, were not done on such majestic scale. Some of his supporters said Pak Lah may be saving a lot of money for his only daughter and that the grand wedding was done to show the parental love for their dearest darling. Yes, he may be right on that score. But politically, that grandeur has tainted Pak Lah's image as a future prime minister, and some, in a cynical way, questioning Pak Lah's "Mr Clean" image. Not only the big feast was held in Kepala Batas but also a grand reception in one of the five star hotels in Kuala Lumpur where thousands of guests were invited. It was also said a special reception for the privileged few and closest friends were also held in Bali, Indonesia. Such extravagance and lavishness on the part of "Mr Clean"

had tarnished his image which would be the talk of the people in years to come.

Another whispering campaign circulating among certain UMNO leaders is Pak Lah's subtle support for Azalina to be the Puteri UMNO chief in the first election of Puteri UMNO's office bearers in November 2002. Many people had the impression Pak Lah's press statement regarding the contest for Puteri's leadership was regarded as an indirect support to Azalina. Furthermore some UMNO leaders were told by certain quarters to give their support to Azalina and no one else. It was said that Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, Pak Lah's wife, played an important role in pushing Azalina as the head of Puteri UMNO. It was also said Azalina and Datin Endon are good friends both coming from Johor. When four contestants trying to topple Azalina, who was then an acting head of Puteri, they were left without a single vote of support from all 165 UMNO divisions in the country. All 165 Puteri divisions voted for Azalina, and she won the leadership with unanimous support from all. This is a historic occasion. Never in the history of UMNO a leader can obtain 100% support from all divisions unless if the positions of presidency or deputy presidency were not to be contested by virtue of the resolution of the UMNO Supreme Council which was done during the UMNO election of 1998 and later on in the year 2000.

When Tengku Razaleigh went against Mahathir for the presidency in 1987 he managed to get more than forty UMNO divisions giving votes to him. Thus he was eligible to go for broke against Mahathir.

According to UMNO amended constitution a candidate for any post of the Supreme Council must receive at least two votes from at least two out of 165 divisions in the country. Ghafar Baba too, the incumbent deputy president in 1993, was able to get about 12 divisional votes to Anwar Ibrahim's over 90 divisional backing for the contest. Unfortunately, knowing that he would be defeated in the delegates' voting in 1993, Ghafar threw his towel and left Anwar with a sweet victory to be the new deputy president of UMNO. Pak Lah was lucky elevated to the deputy president without being challenged by any rival because UMNO Supreme Council, knowing the political temperament of the day, made a resolution not to have any contest for the post of president and the deputy president. UMNO Youth and Wanita UMNO leaders were always being contested. But Azalina broke the record for being unanimously elected even though there were four other contestants for the head of Puteri UMNO. Among the rivals was Ummi Hafilda Ali, the "giant killer" who brought Anwar down from the pedestal of deputy prime minister to the level of a prisoner at Sungai Buloh, who alleged that Azalina is a lesbian. Though the story of Azalina's lesbian relationship was splashed in the newspapers and tabloids there was no action on the part of UMNO to investigate the scandal. The irony of the matter Ummi Hafilda was called by the Disciplinary Committee of UMNO to show cause why she had a press conference and made such wild accusation against Azalina. Because of her action,

Umami Hafilda was found "guilty" by the said committee and was suspended from being elected, or held any position in the party for three years! Another victim of Azalina's case was Elly Zalilah Yusof, a Puteri UMNO member who was once appointed by Zalina to be her secretary. In her press statement she alleged Azalina had used the name of her brother and another lady, Datin Sharifah Sabrina as the owners of four vans belonged to Puteri UMNO. Besides that she also alleged that Azalina had misused donation for Afghanistan' refugees. Though police report was made against Azalina on this two cases by Elly Zalilah hitherto no further action was taken against her. Neither the police or UMNO Disiplinary Committee had pursued further investigation of the allegations made. Elly Zalilah, because of her press meeting exposing Azalina's misgivings, was also called by the Disciplinary Committee and later had a three year suspension from holding any position or be elected to any post in UMNO! Many believed the unwritten order from higher up to all UMNO divisions made Azalina to win unanimously in her maiden venture into the labyrinth of UMNO politics. And with all the allegations against her, Azalina finally won the day with 165 divisions rallied round her and defeated all other contenders who did not win even a single vote at all. It was a record victory for a political novice, an unmarried lawyer of 39 years of age, in the hurly-burly turbulence of UMNO politics. Some, with tongue in the cheek, said Azalina's 100% support by the 165 Puteri branches should be recorded in the

Guinness Book Of Malaysian Records since no UMNO leader has won such overwhelming support given by the young, raw, inexperienced Puteri leaders to Azalina.

Mahathir too made statement about homosexuality and lesbianism in the party. He was very frank in saying that if there is proof that someone is a homosexual or a lesbian in UMNO then action would be taken against him or her. According to Mahathir UMNO cannot tolerate homosexual or lesbian in its leadership since UMNO is an Islamic party.

Azalina, on he part, never rebut the allegation made against her as a lesbian. She was even challenged to take an oath, according to Islamic rites, in the mosque to make a clean breath that she is not what others thought her to be. But she never did. PAS, during the bye election of Anak Bukit and Pendang recently, pasted numerous posters hinting of Azalina's lesbian attraction.

Most of the UMNO leaders are worried that allegation against Azalina can have a negative effect on the Malay voters in the coming election. PAS and KeADILan will definitely create waves on this juicy issue that will definitely win some votes among the traditional Malay folks in the kampungs. Stories have been circulated among PAS members that the son of ulama, Pak Lah, is supporting Azalina whom, they alleged, is a lesbian. If Anwar was brought to court and charged for being homosexual why UMNO did not bring Azalina to book? Is it because she is not a political foe to the leadership or being protected and

supported because she is a dear friend to Pak Lah's wife? According to some the double standard portrayed the banality and political wisdom of those in power without investigation into the allegation whether there is truth or just mere political mudslinging to defame Azalina. Azalina, on her own accord, kept silent over the allegation with the hope time will erase all allegations into forgotten dust. Unfortunately justice is not seen to be done when those who accused her of misdemeanor were brought to 'justice' by the Disciplinary Committee while the core of the matter and the person accused went scot-free, and today becoming the head of Puteri UMNO with pomp and pageantry strutting her weight around. The D-day will come when PAS and KeADILan will turn Azalina's case into a national issue that will drag Pak Lah into the mud in the coming election.

On the whole the people will support Pak Lah as future prime minister since the people respect Mahathir's decision. But the support given does not reflect that everything is alright with the leadership. With a pinch of salt people will give time for Pak Lah to prove that he is an able leader befitting the seat of power bestowed to him by Mahathir. If and when he fails to perform to the expectation of the majority, especially to fulfill the needs of his own party members and the Malays in general, then, sad to say, Pak Lah will face the challenge from other ambitious rivals in the party in the coming UMNO election. These few years as deputy prime minister is a gestation period for him to show his leadership qualities befitting his

stature as the man to shape the future of Malaysia. He has to attune himself fast and efficient, sharp and decisive in making decision in order to fulfill the demands of the time. No more slow beaucratic grinding that made the people waiting patiently for things to happen. No more "look and see" attitude which is being interpreted as inefficiency, laziness or incompetent. Whether he likes it or not Pak Lah has to face the world squarely, and must make decisions fast but not stupid in the eyes of the rakyat. Twenty odd years as a member of the Malaysian administrative service must have formed certain attitudes and residues that may hamper Pak Lah to make fast decisions without recourse to consensus as normally practiced in the rigid slow-moving beaurocracy. Mahathir, Musa Hitam and Anwar, unlike Pak Lah, do not have the mentality of government servants in their attitude towards work and action for they were never schooled in dogmatic and traditional discipline of the government's General Order. Therefore they dare to take the bull by the horns and face any problem with guts and power. They are more independent, more daring and more radical in their pursuit for power, action and goal in life.

When Pak Lah becomes prime minister this October, if Allah permits, then he has to show with wisdom and action that he can be accepted and supported as a genuine Malay leader. Any UMNO leader that fails to fight for the cause of the Malays and Islam would never last long in the saddle of power. Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, The Father of

Independence, though well-respected by all for his great sacrifice for the independence of our country yet, after the bloody May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1969 racial clash, had to make way for Tun Abdul Razak as the second premier for the country. Tengku's too liberal attitude towards the non-Malays, especially on the language issue, made him unpopular among the Malays which led to the racial clash and his retirement from politics. Pak Lah is in the dilemma because he is the UMNO chief in Penang where the Malays are in the minority. Politics of urbanization, though considered a necessity for progress and development, has eroded the Malay political power in the state so much so today only two members of Penang Legislative Assembly from the island are from UMNO, that is Teluk Bahang won by Datuk Dr Hilmy Yahaya, the present deputy chief minister and another at Teluk Kumbar held by another UMNO representative. The rest of 14 from the island are held either by MCA, Gerakan or the opposition party – DAP. Of the 11 Parliamentary seats from Penang UMNO holds three seats – one in Balik Pulau and two more from Seberang Perai where Pak Lah becomes MP for Kepala Batas. Another seat, that is Permatang Pauh, is held by Dr. Wan Azizah Ismail, the leader of KeADILan and wife of Anwar Ibrahim, former deputy prime minister. The rest of the MPs are from MCA and Gerakan. At present UMNO only has ten out of 33 seat State Assembly, another two belonged to Pas and KeADILan, and the rest for the other component parties of Barisan Nasional and another one to DAP.

The Malays, who are in the minority, are also the urban poor living precariously in the midst of non-Malays, namely Chinese, who dominate the economy as well as the politics of the state. The urbanization of Penang, in particular, has driven most Malays to find refuge further into the depth of the Malay kampungs namely in Balik Pulau. Many of the Malay land, including owned by certain Malay cooperative societies, were sold to certain groups for quick gains thereby promoting exodus of the Malays to the mainland or crammed into urban ghettos in the city. There is hue and cry by the marginalized Malays urging UMNO to save them from the vicious cycle of urban poverty and neglected by the state government. In due course, giving another two more elections, the two majority Malay seats of Teluk Bahang and Teluk Kumbar will change hands when great developments in these two areas will spur others to buy costly high-rise buildings and commercial units therefore diluting the Malay majority of these two constituencies. The politics of urbanization, as adopted and implemented by the present state government will gradually erode Malay majority seats in both Penang island and Seberang Perai that, if unchecked, would also erode Pak Lah's future fate in Kepala Batas!

The fear of UMNO political erosion in Penang is not new. The urban Malays, though exposed to the everchanging values and influences of a cosmopolitan city, find it difficult to be on par with the Chinese who are deeply entrenched in the city, controlling the economic sector as well as the state government. Being

poor and lack in education, they become the pawn in the political game of UMNO and other component parties of Barisan Nasional. Only the privileged few, who are connected politically with certain UMNO state leaders, would share the spoilt of politics enriching themselves on the expense of the neglected majority.

Hitherto Pak Lah, and for that matter Anwar Ibrahim, did not do much to uplift the standard of living of the urban poor Malays. Pak Lah was instrumental in introducing Perda which aimed to give more opportunities to the Malays to participate in the economic and trading activities of the state while, at the same time, building small stalls and other business premises for those who indulge in business activities. Unfortunately Perda itself does not offer much economic gains to the poor Malays until today. Anwar Ibrahim too, during his tenure of office as deputy prime minister as well as chairman of UMNO State Liaison Committee of Penang, did not do much to uplift the standard of living of the Malays through various economic projects and activities. He did introduced an institution called Konsotium Bumiputra Pulau Pinang which, in fact, being controlled and benefitted a few Anwar's cronies. Again the poor Penang Malays were being used and abused by some irresponsible UMNO leaders for their own personal gains. Today Pak Lah once again becoming Penang UMNO chief cum deputy prime minister of the country. The big question mark is can he bring about more development and great social and economic well-beings of the

Penang Malays or remain neglected with empty promises of salvation for them to dream about?.

Political survival for him lies in his ability to readjust and bring greater progress for Penang Malays. If he fails to bring fresh ideas and actions to improve the lot then his rivals in the party, as well as PAS and KeADILan, will capitalise it into a big issue to discredit him. Now some concerned Malay leaders are asking if Pak Lah cannot help poor Penang Malays, people from his own state to improve their lot, how can he tackle and bring about great strides of development of the Malays for the whole country? How can he lead the Malays to shape their future in this multiracial country if he fails to bring good social, economic, political and educational progress for his own folks in Penang? It is an irony, according to some Malay political observers, that a Malay leader from Penang where Malays are in the minority, is given the rein to lead UMNO and the government of the country. Every one knows Malaysian politics is greatly embedded in racial politics even after 43 years of independence. The major Barisan Nasional component parties are racially-based parties like UMNO, MCA, and MIC. Racial integration and national unity that have been inculcated in various forms and projects by the government are considered too idealistic, and most likely, cannot be achieved in another decade or two. Malay political power, at whatever cost, must be preserved though without sacrificing the rights of other races. This is the main concern of Malays every where especially in Penang where the politics of urbanation

has marginalize the Malays devoid of political power, economic poverty and becoming social outcasts in the throbbing cosmopolitan city of Penang. UMNO must be seen and act as the protector of the Malays and other bumiputras. If the president of UMNO fails in this duty to safeguard the political power and aspirations of the Malays, then in due course, the Malays would want him to be replaced with another who is considered more dynamic, capable and far-sighted to lead the party. This is the core of Malay politics where Malay power and Islam become an integral part of Malay personality, hopes and goals in life.

Looking at Penang Malay political scenario and the position of Pak Lah as UMNO state chief cum as future prime minister there is likelihood that he would be challenged as president of UMNO in the coming party election. As said earlier his stature as the leader of UMNO and the head of government are much to be desired when one compares the stature of Mahathir to that of his successor. Besides, many UMNO leaders believe Pak Lah, being a leader from Penang, a Malay minority state, is not suitable to be the leader of UMNO because of his lack lustre approach and inability to champion the cause and aspirations of the Malays in his own state. Even if he is being made the premier, many political observers said, the chances are that he would be there for a short period only as a sign of respect for Mahathir that appoints him. In other words, many believe Pak Lah will be a prime minister in transit when another leader of of distinction and of

high caliber would replace him as premier as well as the leader of UMNO.

It must be emphasised UMNO must have strong leadership that will win respect, honour and awe by the people. Being the most senior of all component parties in Barisan Nasional UMNO, since independence until now, UMNO has been playing leading roles in charting the history of our nation. UMNO continuously since 1957 leads the government through storms and stress. All those who oppose UMNO leadership, within or without, were met with failures. The political power of this Malay party is derived from respect, honour and trust given by the Malays as well as the non-Malays who accept UMNO as a protector of all citizens irrespective of their race, religion or culture. Once UMNO leadership is considered weak, besieged with internal conflicts that weaken the party, then respect and trust by the people would be dwindled, and if the leadership becoming more decadent, then other forces, inside as well as outside the party, would launch their challenge against her.

Therefore its leadership must always be strong, dynamic and action-oriented, rich in ideas and considered rakyat-friendly. Pak Lah, at this juncture, gives some lingering doubts on the minds of the people of his ability to give the best in leading UMNO and the country. By being the UMNO leader in the Malay minority state of Penang does not put Pak Lah in the best, secured position to lead UMNO at the highest level. Penang, being a former Straits Settlement, does not have a Malay sultan like the other nine Malay

states. The Malay sultans, though only constitutional monarch, still have the aura and trappings of the traditional power of the ancient time. By virtue of being the head of Islam and Malay customs at their respective states, give the sultans a certain psychological cultural attachments to the Malays. Penang, having a Yang Di-Pertua Negeri or Governor, is not considered on par with the Malay sultanate for all Yang Di-Pertua Negeri of Penang, Malacca, Sarawak and Sabah must be blessed and appointed by Duli Yang Maha Mulia Yang Di-Pertuan Agong unlike the other Malay rulers. On this aspect Pak Lah is considered disadvantage when compared to other leaders or his rivals that come from Malay sultanate states who are intimately aligned to the Malay cultural aspirations. Though as future prime minister he can wield much power and can determine the course of history of the Malays in particular yet his inability to bring about much changes in the lives of Penang Malays made others to be skeptical of his future role as the leader of UMNO and the government. The onus is on Pak Lah to show that being a Malay leader in Penang, the minority group, is not a handicap for him to be the best prime minister of the country as well as the president of UMNO.

Tan Sri Musa Hitam, former deputy prime minister, in his interview with *Mingguan Malaysia* (5<sup>th</sup> January 2003) mentioned that Pak Lah needs good and experienced advisors to help in to shape the future of his leadership and the country. In other words, he too has some misgivings about Pak Lah's future fate.

Coming from someone who is considered very experienced and well-versed in the political game Pak Lah, whether he likes it or not, has to take heed and give attention to criticisms made by others in order not to be off-tangent from the mainstream opinions about himself. Musa's comments are shared by the majority and are not done in bad faith since he has no more interest in the power struggles in UMNO. If he is being carried away by the trappings of power, intoxicated by it, putting cronies, hangers-on and relatives of suspected talent, experience and lacking good education to positions of high stature, then, sad to say, he is inviting more problems for himself. Some observers say there arise a "Bertam Mafia" where Pak Lah's relatives and cronies are given state awards and positions of importance in the party and government in Penang, though many consider some of them are not worth for the awards given.. There is "relatives sendirian berhad" syndrome in state UMNO politics that has become the whispering campaigns among friends and foes alike. Another crony of his was given a high profile appointment when every one knows that person has only SPM qualification, lacks great experience in his profession and was once considered a security risk.

The changing of guards need careful step to implement. Mahathir, though reaching at the height of his achievements, has decided to give way to his successor with the great hope that Pak Lah can achieve greater success than him. Also he wants other ambitious UMNO leaders to accept Pak Lah heart and

soul as their uncontested leader so that he could carry the weight of responsibility with gusto and without fear. Politics is a game of the possible, neither permanent foes nor permanent friends. They may sleep on the same bed but their dreams are different. They may embrace one another, kiss each other's cheeks but, when the right time comes, they may fight each other till death departs.

There is no smooth sailing for Pak Lah from now on until the coming UMNO's election of Supreme Council members. The great respect for Mahathir and the coming general election help Pak Lah to trudge on without disturb taking stock of his position and planning the turbulent future ahead. All is not quiet in the UMNO front, only a lull in the battle for power later on. Though some UMNO leaders made political statements that they are willing to give way to new blood in order to facilitate Pak Lah to choose candidates of his choice, yet many admitted, such statements are made with a pinch of salt. Statements are political gimmicks with a tongue in the cheek but quietly planting political booby-traps for Pak Lah and their rivals. Wrong choice of candidates for elections will trigger more problems for Pak Lah to handle. Strong and wise leadership are not born but grow with time, experience and wealth of knowledge. Yes, we have leaders who are catapulted into prominence because of money politics, pulled up by decadent and corrupted delegates who were willing to sell their souls for a few ringgits. But the Malays cannot accept decadent and corrupted leaders any more. Enough is

enough. It is time for all Malays, especially UMNO leaders and rank and file to choose the best among the cream in their midst, throw the corrupted and the scandal-rich ones from the corridor of power. Money politics must not be part and parcel of UMNO culture that can ruin future generations and the erosion of political power in the near future. Only the best leaders should be chosen, supported and admired. The political power UMNO leaders hold to-day is not "sendirian berhad" where the privileged few, the corrupted and the decadent hangers-on abuse the filial support given by their own kind and others.

Being the son of an *ulama*, a former senior government officer for over two decades, and an experienced politician Pak Lah must be seen to be very clean, dynamic in his actions, full of rich ideas worthy of respect by the rakyat. He must be seen to abhor nepotism and cronyism, made wise decisions to win the respect and support of the majority. Empty rhetoric, without substance, promises made and broken, unwise statements to sooth the sentiments of certain groups would seal his fate as a poor leader. Pak Lah, to instill confidence and gaining support from the rakyat, must do self-criticism, soul searching, overcoming his weaknesses and accept healthy criticism with open heart without malice or prejudice. Of course no one is perfect. But a leader of substance, wise, a lover of knowledge and truth, can be considered successful if puts the interest of the rakyat and the country above his personal gains, and by doing so, wins the respect and support of the majority. In

political terms, these are the right ingredients of a good and successful leader. Of all the leaders of to-day Mahathir stands tall above others, wielding power, transforming the country and the rakyat during his 22 years as head of UMNO and the government. One may hate some of the policies and actions but one cannot deny that Mahathir, with his great determination, knowledge and power, has shaped the destiny of the rakyat and our country to be one of the best in the world. At present Pak Lah is walking under the shadow of Mahathir, understudying the mentor in order to achieve greater heights of development and success for the people and the country in the future. He must realize the past has become history, glorifying it is an exercise of nostalgia. It would not make him a great leader of reverence. He must pursue the future with the greatest challenge and dynamism in order to prop up confidence among the rakyat that he is worthy to be Mahathir's successor. Of course Pak Lah cannot be a clone of Mahathir. But he can be a great leader. Greatness of a leader is not born but created, nurtured with knowledge, experience and time.

23rd February 2003  
Kampung Tunku  
At 1.19 a.m.



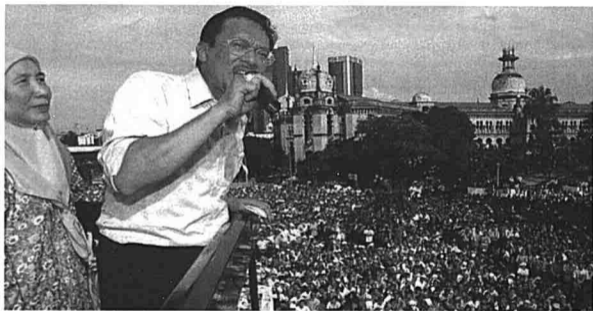
*How many of these UMNO Youth exco members are fit to be leaders of tommorrow?*



*Wanita UMNO exco members with Dr. Mabatbir and Pak Lab*



*Puteri UMNO exco members with Dr Mabatbir and Pak Lab.*



*Thousands of people listened to Anwar's fiery speech attacking the government when he was sacked from the cabinet and UMNO in Kuala Lumpur.*



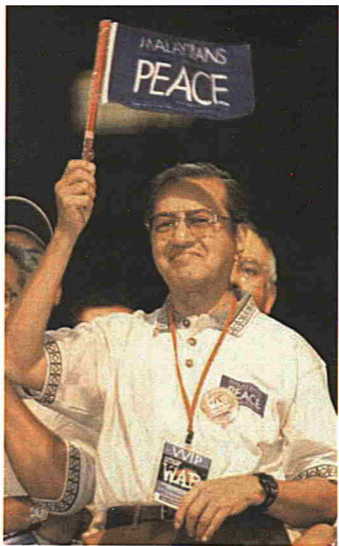
*Anwar Ibrahim, once a protégé of Mahathir, later becoming a VIP prisoner at Sungai Buloh jail.*



*Mabatbir was responding to a question by George Soros, the man who brought about economic chaos in Asia in 1997.*



*Mabatbir - a leader of world class, bigbly respected by world leaders addressing NAM conference  
beld in Kuala Lumpur recently*



*Outlaw war for peace.*



*Prime Minister and his successor. The destiny of the nation is in Pak Lab's hand after Mahatir.*



*Dr Rais Yatim and his loving wife, Maznab. This man will play more important role in Malaysian politics in the near future.*



*Najib and his beloved, ambitious wife, Rosmah Mansor.*



*Rafidah Aziz who is considered one of the best Malaysian politicians and can play an important role in helping Pak Lab*



*Tan Sri Musa Hitam, a respected leader of all times.*



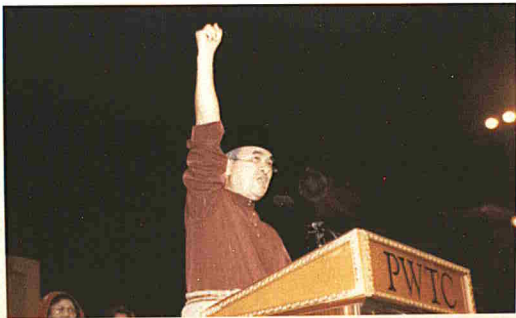
*Pak Lab and wife, Endon Mahmood helped Dr Mabatbir and wife, Dr Siti Hasma cut birthday cake.*



*Dr Mubtashir was invited by Pope John Paul II to visit Vatican city for an audience - a recognition of Mubtashir's leadership as a moderate, liberal muslim leader.*



*UMNO annual general meeting always becomes the focus of attention for those who are interested to know Malay politics.*



*The battle cry for unity in diversity!*



*The present three vice presidents of UMNO who were once known as the Wawasan Team during Anwar's time. Tan Sri Mubammad Mohd Taib (left) Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak (centre) and Tan Sri Mubiyiddin Yassin (right)*



*Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah is still popular and has many followers in UMNO. A veteran leader not to be discounted.*



*Two rivals for the leadership of UMNO.*



*Ummi Hafilda Ali, the young brave woman who helped to topple Anwar from the seat of power thus saving Mahatbir and Pak lab.*



*Good bye Putrajaya!*