

Title: LEADERSHIP AND ITS CHALLENGES
Events: RSOG Leadership Forum
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Time: 4.00 pm
Venue: Razak School of Government (RSOG), Putrajaya
Speaker: YAB Tun Daim Zainuddin

Thank you for inviting me to speak. It is an honour and a privilege. I accepted it because Prof. Madya Dr. Hamidin is my supervisor. How am I to reject it?

The topic I chose is *Leadership and its challenges*. It is not an easy topic but I will do my best to give my views.

Today, the world is facing many challenges. In America, the leadership is facing an economic crisis, with high unemployment and a huge deficit despite bailing out banks and companies; and no solution is at hand because of partisan politics.

Europe too is facing problems with Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain in bad shape.

In the Middle East, the demands for change have been labeled as Arab Spring. What started off because of high unemployment and high cost of food have resulted in toppling two dictators in Tunisia and Egypt. Yemen looks like a possible third, and Libya is unlikely to hold on much longer. There is also Syria. Yes, people want change but it is the response from the West that is puzzling. NATO is bombing Libya and wants a regime change, but not bombing Syria or Yemen and Saudi tanks are in Bahrain. Is it Oil that decides the foreign policy of the West?

We are watching a world in a state of uncertainty, where leadership in the West seems confused, sends different signals, confusing themselves and the world.

These trouble spots do not directly affect us politically, but they affect us economically. The countries in the Middle East have huge oil reserves and we need oil to feed our industries. Any increase in oil prices pushes up our costs, resulting in inflation. For us to have stable growth, we need stable prices. These are the challenges for the world's and our leadership. How do we achieve decent growth with price stability?

In Malaysia, our leadership has faced many challenges throughout its history. Let us start from the Malayan Union when the country at the height of the crisis, produced Dato Onn Jaffar as its leader. He dismantled the Malayan Union, united the Malays, brought back their dignity and restored the status of the Malay rulers. When he wanted to open up UMNO to non-Malays, he was rejected by UMNO and so he left and formed the IMP. IMP was rejected by both the Malays and the Non-Malays in the 1952 elections. Were they right to reject his idea? As a great leader, he was not even acknowledged and was the only UMNO President other than Tunku who declined, not conferred with the title of Tun. Lesser leaders have been so honoured.

Tunku took over from Dato Onn and brought back Malays who left with Dato Onn to support UMNO. He formed the Alliance, brought independence to the country, established Malaysia in 1963 and faced confrontation with Sukarno's Indonesia and Philippines's claim on Sabah and in 1965 expelled Singapore from Malaysia. However the 1969 election resulted in racial riots and spelt the end of Tunku's tenure as PM. He left a broken man.

Tun Razak succeeded Tunku, expanded Alliance to BN and introduced NEP. NEP was the greatest restructuring of society ever tried out anywhere. But Tun Razak died early and he was succeeded by Hussein Onn, my contemporary in London. Hussein did not hold office long and Mahathir succeeded him and went on to become the longest serving PM.

Under Mahathir's watch, politically, UMNO was split with the forming of Semangat 46 and Keadilan; and had 4 DPMs. economically; he faced two recessions and overcame them. He introduced name-tags, clock in, Look East and Buy British Last policies amongst many others. He even brought forward time! One can't deny that he brought pride and dignity to the Malaysians generally and Malays particularly.

He was succeeded by Abdullah but Mahathir was a difficult act to follow. In many ways its unfair to compare as they are both different. Abdullah decided to give space to people and the people responded by giving him a huge mandate in 2004, only to withdraw that mandate because of unfulfilled promises. He was also badly advised by inexperienced advisors.

That, Ladies and gentleman is a brief history of our leadership. What then, of our present leadership?

Najib is a very intelligent person, but as we know there are many intelligent people in our country and they don't become PM.

All our leaders have faced many challenges. But I think Najib faces many more challenges than previous leaders. The political landscape has changed so much since 2008. The Rakyat's expectations are very high and if he does not deliver, they now have options. The people want to see PM addressing, I think, the following:

- Corruption, and this is tied to wastage of public funds;
- Their security, they want to be assured of their safety. Papers report crimes daily;
- The economy and inflation. We are an open economy and what happens in the world affects us and rising costs of living affects our daily lives;
- Malaysia's growth in view of the rise and rapid growth of China and India;
- Good governance – the government is answerable to Parliament and to the people;
- Sustainable growth with equality. How to expand the pie so that all Malaysians can benefit equally;

- To contain brain drain and the pessimism of our youth in this country's future;
- The environment and the need for sustainable development.

That is not an exhaust-able list, and in the immediate, there are still the poor who support the government but does not care about the billions that are to be spent on projects. If the price of sugar goes up by a few cents, it affects them. Telling them to eat less sugar when the government increases the price does not make them happy. They are poor and there is not much to waste. They see the ostentatious living by the leaders and their families and projects that are built and then not properly maintained or left to rot. This is wastage. Civil servants can see that foreign consultants are being paid handsomely for work that can be done by them. And people become cynical and to the rakyat, the government and leaders come across as hypocritical!

Apart from all of the above the PM also has to address political differences in the country; particularly:-

- How to win back support from the youth, the urban voters, the civil servants, the Malay voters who rejected UMNO? How to win more seats than 2008? How to handle the old guards in his cabinet, those who refuse to leave gracefully and those even after being rejected by the people end up as senators? How to respond to the new media; especially on a personal level, the internet and the blogs are full of stories about the role of his wife? How to deal with a PAS that no longer talks of an Islamic State but a Welfare State?
- All political and economic issues, Ladies and gentleman, any leader of any country will face, give or take some peculiarity of each country. How a leader deals with these issues in his country will determine his place in history.

To me however the biggest challenge for this leadership and here I include the leadership in the Opposition too, is how we see the future direction that this country should take. If ladies and gentleman, you were to close your eyes for a moment and see into the future, what do you imagine Malaysia will be like in 10, 20, 50 years from now? Will we be more successful or stagnant or have fallen back? Will our country be peaceful and harmonious, will we share common values, and what type of Malaysians will we be?

What we will be in the future will be determined by our young today and it starts with our education system. If you read in the press and in the internet, no one is happy with our education system. We are probably the only country in the world where our young go to different types of schools and are segregated by race at an impressionable age. Yet we hope to achieve national unity and 1Malaysia. Do you think our founding fathers planned or would approve this kind of education system? Are our politicians brave enough to face the truth and say we need only one type of school and one medium of instruction if we are serious and really love our country?

Would our leaders stand up to the chauvinist and the racist and the parochial; would they be willing to sacrifice their positions to achieve what may be suicidal in the short term but would lead to a successful, harmonious and united Malaysia in the future? If we do not take the bull by the horns in dealing with our separate systems now and let it fester like a sore in the Malaysian psyche then we do a disservice to this land we call home and to those we leave behind this mess. I urge all, especially those who call themselves leaders to lead in solving this biggest issue and be prepared to be sacrificed at the altar of our unity. But we, in our way, are leaders too, of our home and our office and in our inter-personal relationships and we have to be the kind of person we want our fellow Malaysians to be.

Above are many of the challenges facing our leaders and the PM particularly. Don't ignore them, address them, find answers and explain clearly to the rakyat your plans for their future and chart them clearly so that they understand. If they see that government is sincere and has real good programmes for them and country, they will support. It is up to PM and his government to respond to the challenges.

Thank you.