

# Time to examine weaknesses, missteps

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How easy it is to be a member of the opposition pact; it is as if they have full licence to freely commit anything, free to utter the foulest words; for everything that is bad can be conveniently blamed on Umno. I am not saying that all Umno members are blameless or without weaknesses.

But certainly, Umno members should not be treated as garbage bins, merely to collect blame and slander that arise from the immoral behaviour and misconduct of others. It is not reasonable to believe that members and supporters of opposition parties are free from sin or flaws. Certainly, they cannot all be saints.

Nonetheless, Umno is facing a test of credibility. Why are we suffering this fate, blamed to this terrible extent? Why are we now seen to be completely without virtue? This situation has placed a heavy test of credibility on Umno.



A section of the Umno delegates at the opening of the Umno general assembly at Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday morning.

must, therefore, greet every success and setback with equanimity, because everything is a test from God to remind His people so that they may heed His commands and search for truth.

The Holy Quran contains numerous verses which serve to guide and remind us.

*"See they not that Allah enlarges the provisions and restricts it to whomsoever He pleases? Verily in that are Signs for those who believe."* Surah Ar-Ruum - 37

Umno was born out of the merger of voluntary non-governmental bodies — Umno graduated from the NGOs (non-governmental organisations). Umno was strong when Umno maintained a close relationship with the community. Umno leaders were known as leaders who were always close to the community at the grassroots level.

Umno succeeded in fostering the relationship between those in rural areas with those

Recently, the Malays have begun to feel threatened by demands which are seen to be extreme and unreasonable by non-Malays upholding the 'Malaysian Malaysia' slogan that is vocally championed by the opposition alliance.

There are those among the leaders of the opposition alliance who have ridiculed the sovereignty of the Malay rulers in an ill-mannered and uncouth fashion, openly insulted the Malays, and heaped crude and vulgar abuse on Malay organisations.

At the same time, non-Malays — including our friends in the Barisan Nasional — feel compelled to speak out more stridently, feeling themselves marginalised and sidelined as a result of slippage in the implementation of certain government policies. Both parties are making their concerns heard; both parties are harbouring mistrust and doubt.

If we allow this state of af-

There are a number of internal factors which have led to this erosion of public trust in Umno.

First: longevity in power has led to complacency and a number of Umno leaders are increasingly out of touch with the ordinary people who have been the source of Umno's strength for so long.

Second: relative neglect of the rural community in our desire and intent to achieve developed nation status.

Third: ineffectiveness of Umno political programmes in reaching out to the younger generation, apart from what is already being implemented by various governmental institutions.

Fourth: prolonged conflict among ourselves, especially while competing for positions within the party, has eroded the spirit of fraternity among party members.

Fifth: materialism has seeped into the party, making a number of party members greedy and avaricious, hence creating the negative perception that Umno is a corrupt party.

These internal factors have given great fodder to Umno's enemies in their efforts to tarnish Umno. At the same time, a certain group of Malay leaders have opened the door for Malays and Bumiputeras to be attacked or insulted at will.

These continuous and concerted attacks have tarnished the good name of Umno and poisoned the minds of the people to the point that the public believes and accepts every lie and slander that has been made against Umno without any rational nor objective assessment.

Indeed, we must heed the alarm bells that have rung so

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loudly, demanding us to ask “what went wrong?” or “why and how did we go wrong?”.

My spontaneous response to that question is: “We have failed to manage our own success”. We were intoxicated by our achievements and we became complacent. We believed that we had become all-powerful. We have put our own positions within the party first, instead of being concerned over Umno's position in the eyes of our citizens and the nation.

Our current situation requires us to reflect within ourselves, to revisit the basis of our power all these years and to examine our weaknesses and recent missteps.

In this regard, it is worth reviewing the source of Umno's strengths since its establishment in 1946. Briefly, we can summarise them as follows:

First: Umno's sensitivity in understanding and dealing with the problems and aspirations of the Malays.

Second: Umno's ability and success in managing coopera-

tion among the races and Umno's openness in acknowledging the role and importance of other races in our country.

Third: Umno's ability to reconcile competing and contradictory demands.

Fourth: Umno's ability to adapt to social and political changes.

Fifth: Umno's ability to absorb newly-emerging social and political forces.

Sixth: Umno's ability to seek a balance between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, the local and the global.

We began with the slogan “Hidup Melayu”, shifted to “Merdeka”, then on to “Pembangunan”, followed by “Perpaduan” and onwards to “Achieve developed nation status”, which was strengthened with the “National Mission”.

That is the dynamic nature of Umno, always adapting its struggle to current demands, reorienting its direction with the passage of time.

The extraordinary uniqueness that has become the backbone of Umno's true might is its ability to pioneer and foster cooperation between the races that is truly meaningful — beginning with the Umno-MCA partnership, followed by MIC to form the Alliance that was later expanded into the Barisan Nasional.

Other attempts to foster inter-communal cooperation, such as efforts by the Independence Party of Malaya and Parti Negara ended in failure.

The Malaysian Convention Party did not succeed, and neither did the formation of a Socialist Front through the merger of the People's Party and the Labour Party.

Today, the opposition pact is earnestly attempting to imitate Umno's successful copyrighted formula for cooperation. Although they are still enjoying their honeymoon period, visible cracks are beginning to show in their union.

We can conclude that the secret of Umno's strength and success over the years is its sensitivity to the changing times and its ability to adapt to the demands of new social forces.

Each situation has been faced and addressed by Umno in a spirit of moderation, enacting change without sacrificing continuity. This has created a situation of dynamic balance which led to stability and peace, enabling the nation and its citizens to enjoy growth and development.

It is this secret of our success that is now being targeted for

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relentless attack by the opposition. This is what we must polish and renew; we need to build a new dimension to this success so that we may benefit from it. If we have lost our way, let us retrace our steps and return to the correct path.

We believe in the Oneness of God, the Pillars of Islam (Rukun Islam) and the Articles of Faith (Rukun Iman). We

those in rural areas with those in urban areas, between the people and the aristocrats, in a united fellowship, supporting a united struggle by putting the people's interests first.

Umno was once led by many Malay teachers who were acknowledged as genuinely representing the people and, therefore, became popular leaders in the truest sense.

Today, we are grateful and proud that Umno is being led and represented by many professionals, technocrats and corporate figures.

What we need now is to reinvigorate the spirit of service and of being close to the people to complement the professional qualifications that we have succeeded in obtaining, so that Umno continues to be in line with the wishes and aspirations of the people.

Umno must truly understand the pulse of the rakyat so

that its members can be true to the motto: “Unity, Loyalty, Service” (“Bersatu, Bersetia, Berkhidmat”).

We must also re-emphasise the formula that has put us in good stead over the years, a formula that has enabled us to successfully share power and govern the nation with our partners in the Barisan Nasional.

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if we allow this state of affairs to continue, it will certainly erode the spirit of cooperation and destroy the unity that we have built more than 50 years ago. We cannot allow these fundamental principles to be weakened.

We must sincerely endeavour, with open hearts, to rediscover the cooperation and mutual understanding that have formed the basis of our national unity, so that we may ensure a future that is peaceful, stable and prosperous for the coming generation.

We cannot allow our nation's future to be mortgaged to those who have laid cunning plans, opportunists who have gained support from their success in inciting the people's hatred towards us.

Five months after I was appointed deputy prime minister on June 17, 1999, I stood on this stage before you to officiate the annual general assembly of the Youth and Wanita wings, and I quoted from Verse 68 Surah Al Qasas: “*And your Lord creates whatsoever He will and chooses: no choice have they (in any matter). Glorified be Allah, and exalted above all that they associate (as partners with Him).*”

It was Allah's will that enabled me to earn the trust to lead Umno and the country. I am the last of my generation still serving in the cabinet.

I have decided to retire some time after this assembly and the leadership of the country will pass on to the next generation.

When I chose to be an Umno member 45 years ago, I had one desire and one intent — to serve the party which had done so much for my people and my country.

# Honouring the unsung heroes of Umno

N.S.T 27/3/09 M.S.K  
Keynote address by umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the 59th Umno general assembly at Putra World Trade Centre yesterday.

ALHAMDULILLAH, the highest praise is for Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala, for it is with His blessings, that the 59th Umno general assembly is now under way. This year, Insha Allah, Umno will be 63 years old on May 2009; and if Allah also permits Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to go on, I will reach the age of 70 this coming Nov 26th.

When Umno was established, I was a mere boy in primary school. Many members of my family, especially my grandfather, Haji Abdullah Fahim (Allahyarham), my father Haji Ahmad Badawi (Allahyarham) and my mother Hajjah Khailan binti Hassan (Allahyarhamah) were actively involved in the founding of Umno.

I observed various meetings and discussions, including those held in my grandfather's home and the Madrasah Daeratul Maarif Al-Wataniah although, at that time, I did not truly understand much of what was being deliberated.

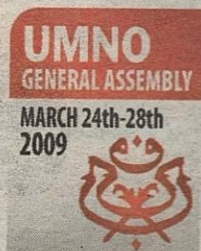
I am descended from founding fathers of Umno and I was exposed to the party's struggle during my formative years. It is, therefore, inevitable that I would inherit the Umno spirit.

As an adult, I later chose to join Umno, because I believed in the purity of its objectives and the worthiness of its cause.

I have held fast to an unflinching conviction that has prevented me from ever betraying Umno and has led me to steer clear from those who seek to destroy it. I have never denigrated Umno. I have never made offensive remarks about Umno. And certainly, I have never deserted Umno, even though there was a time when I was insulted by certain members of Umno.

Indeed, one's loyalty is truly tested when the party is faced with grave challenges during a time of difficulty and when one has no position or standing within the party.

I witnessed the struggles of my grandfather and my father, the sacrifices borne by my mother, and that of their generation. I have seen thousands of members, who have fought for Umno's cause. I saw that the strength of Umno was forged and made potent by unsung heroes, anonymous and without rank in the party, many of whom have never



made it to this Dewan Merdeka. These are people who have never offered to contest any position in the party's supreme council, who have never asked to take but instead, kept on giving; who did not see Umno as a means to satisfy their self-interest or personal gain.

They are the true heroes of Umno. They are the ones who have supported and upheld the party; they are the heroes who have kept faith in Umno's commitment and resolve in protecting the Malays fighting for the independence of the nation, in upholding Islam, in defending the sovereignty of the Malay rulers and maintaining the status of the Malay language and Malay culture.

They are the ones who are true standard bearers of Umno's struggle — the struggle for the Malays people.

I have been with Umno for a long time. I first came to know of the party as a 7-year-old boy. I followed the party throughout my days as a youth and joined the party as an adult.

Umno has always been my political organisation of choice, and I have pledged my unbroken loyalty to its struggle because it has been my clear and unshakable conviction that Umno's mission is noble and genuine. Notwithstanding any negative perceptions and opinions on Umno today, no one can deny that Umno has made countless contributions in a variety of areas to our nation and its citizens since its establishment in 1946, including Islam and Malay civilisation, politics and peace, as well as in the socio-economic arena.

In the 63 years since its founding, Umno has succeeded. Umno has contributed towards the unity of the Malays, stoked the fires of Malay nationalism, upheld the dignity of Islam, restored the sovereignty of the Malay rulers, forged understanding and cooperation between the races, negotiated



Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi waves as he arrives at Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur, for the opening of the Umno general assembly yesterday.

for and obtained the Independence of the Federation of Malaya and expanded it to form Malaysia, protected the peace and security of our nation, nurtured the nation's social and economic development, made Malaysia a land of plenty, created the Malay middle class, eradicated poverty, pioneered various forms of co-operation among the Asean nations and played an active role in promoting understanding and fellowship among the Muslim countries around the world.

For a long time, the contributions made and successes achieved by Umno were appreciated and accepted by the citizens of our country and acknowledged by the international community. As a result, in successive general elections, a majority of Malaysians entrusted their vote, time and again, to Umno and its partners in Barisan Nasional. Internationally, stories of our success are often referred to, and held up as a positive example for other nations.

In the past 50 years,

Malaysia has progressed from being one of the poorest nations in the world, to being acknowledged recently by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) as a nation with high human development. Foreign workers recognise Malaysia as a land of opportunity, a nation blessed with abundant prosperity.

Nevertheless, we must also realise that of late, Umno's glory has dimmed. The results of the 12th general election are an important reminder.

Today, everything that Umno does is seen as wrong, everything that Umno says is believed to be untrue.

Indeed Umno, as well as the Barisan Nasional, have become everyone's favourite whipping boy, labelled as the cause of every defect and discordance, and blamed as the perpetrator of immoral behaviour and misconduct, even when such actions are committed by those who are members of political parties opposed to Umno.

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