

Why Did The Late Tan Sri Megat Junid Cry Twice Before Me?

Matthias Chang

Sunday, 27 July 2008 21:24 - Last Updated Wednesday, 20 August 2008 10:10

Where The Buck Stops!

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A great leader never claims glory all to himself and ducks behind subordinates when ghastly mistakes are committed.

It comes as no surprise to me when Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in his recent posting in his Blog – www.chedet.com - assumed total responsibility for the ghastly mistake of appointing Abdullah Badawi as the Deputy Prime Minister, following the disgraceful exit by Anwar Ibrahim upon his conviction. Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad had on a previous occasion, in his interview in BBC's HARDTalk, admitted that he had made a mistake in choosing Badawi as his successor.

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But on this occasion Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was more explicit.

Notwithstanding the admission, the events leading to the appointment of Badawi as Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's successor is not as simple as Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad unilaterally picking Badawi as the next prime minister.

The Greatest Political Mistake

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I have decided to make this exposé for two reasons, namely: (i) I want to dispel the myth that Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was solely responsible for the ghastly mistake of appointing Badawi as the Deputy Prime Minister and therefore his successor and (ii) I believe that the late Tan Sri Megat Junid had entrusted the responsibility to me to reveal the truth regarding the circumstances of the appointment of Badawi as Deputy Prime Minister.

Tan Sri Megat Junid confided in me that the greatest political mistake in his entire career was his pivotal recommendation that Badawi be appointed as Tun's successor.

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I was stunned by his revelation as the purpose of my meeting with Tan Sri had nothing to do with that issue but to get Tan Sri's perspective and further background information on the Anwar Ibrahim episode in the history of UMNO's internal struggles in my research work for Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

In the course of our conversation, he interjected and asked, ***“Matthias, as a former political secretary to another, and having served the same boss, would you like to know what was my greatest political mistake?”***

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I was dumbfounded by the question! In the history of Prime Minister's political secretaries, he

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was a giant and a superb political craftsman. I was embarrassed by the question as I was not his confidante and tried to evade the question.

But Tan Sri repeated the question and with tears welling in his eyes, said, ***“My greatest mistake in my political career is to recommend Badawi as successor to Mahathir. Pak Lah was not his first choice. I was told by those who wanted Badawi as successor that if anyone could convince Mahathir, it would be me. At that time, I believe Pak Lah was the correct choice. So I recommended Pak Lah to Mahathir.”***

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Tan Sri then exhorted me to be “loyal to Mahathir and defend his legacy” as there were ongoing efforts to destroy that legacy. His voice breaking, Tan Sri said that he cannot do very much in the circumstances, as he is getting old and had “retired from politics”.

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Seeing the pain and the anguish, I sought Tan Sri's indulgence to be excused from continuing with the meeting and hastily departed.

The second occasion was equally painful, if not more so. Tan Sri was suffering from cancer and was at the Perdana Leadership Foundation for one of its events. While waiting for Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to officiate the event, Tan Sri took me away from the crowd and unashamedly said:

“I just don't know what to say to Tun. I am having treatment for my cancer and God willing I will recover. But right now I can't do much. I never expected such attacks on Tun. I regret asking him to appoint Pak Lah ... ”

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Again, tears were welling in his eyes and rolling down his cheeks. His lips quivering, and voice breaking Tan Sri said, ***“Take care of Tun. We are the front lines. You take care and be vigilant.”***

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I clasped Tan Sri’s hands and could not help the tears welling in my eyes as well and in that one special moment, sealed a promise – to fight together to the very end, come hell or high water!

This is the Tan Sri Megat Junid that I want everyone in UMNO to remember. Tan Sri could not right the wrong that he had committed but he has entrusted us that duty and responsibility. Although Tan Sri is no longer with us, it is his wish that you go down to the trenches to fight and restore the true glory of UMNO.

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UMNO is being destroyed from within and only members of UMNO can restore UMNO and this can only come about if the present leadership of UMNO is changed right now, not in 2010.

God willing members of UMNO will right this wrong!