

Proposals for BN reform and beyond

Written by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah

Tuesday, 10 March 2009 00:00 - Last Updated Monday, 10 October 2011 15:51

(Video Inside - Courtesy of Astro Awani)

1. Open Barisan Nasional to direct membership by individuals only. Do away with membership by parties.

2. Only parties whose membership reflects the racial composition of the country will be allowed to contest elections. Race-based organizations may no longer register as political parties to contest elections. Every party that wishes to submit candidates for elections must be able to demonstrate that its membership is open to all Malaysians and reflects Malaysia's racial diversity. We will need to apply some workable formula to measure this. It will feel artificial at first, but we have to start somewhere.

Amend the Societies Act and, if possible, the Constitution, to set these rules.

I shared this proposal in a taped interview for AWANI news after the live interview with Agenda AWANI last night (March 9). It will air at 1.30am and throughout the day on Tuesday March 10, 2009.

Recall my five proposals for the reform of UMNO (plus term limits)

1. The president, deputy president, vice presidents and members of the supreme council to

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be elected directly. This ends the delegate system.

2. State party chiefs to be elected by the membership at state level, not appointed by the president.
3. The nominations quotas to be abolished
4. Parliamentary candidates to be nominated by their Divisions, not by the party president.
5. Separate party politics from the responsibilities of government (see below)
6. Set term limits. Three terms for the President. Two terms for state leadership.

Addendum to No. 5

To ensure the separation of party position from government positions, recognize a parliamentary party of BN, consisting of BN's elected MP's. This group elects its own leader. In a reformed UMNO, this person would not be the President, because the President would not be allowed to lead the parliamentary party. If the leader of the parliamentary party obtains the support of enough members of the House, he may be called by the Yang Dipertuan Agong to form the government as Prime Minister.

This is how it often works in other parliamentary democracies.

India's Congress Party is chaired by Sonia Gandhi. But the leader of the Parliamentary Congress Party is Manmohan Singh, who, because he commands the confidence of a majority of Parliamentarians, is also Prime Minister. The world knows the name of the US President but few people know the name of the chairman of the Democratic Party.

There is nothing strange about this. The tasks of running a country and of building up a political party are very different, and should be kept separate. When we confuse the two, party leaders who also control the government use that power and the resources it commands to ensure their dominance of the party. This corrupts both government and party as people join political parties and enter government for the wrong reasons. This is what has happened to Umno.

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For parliamentary democracy to work we must have a healthy system of political parties. My proposals aim to rebuild our party system for the 21st century.

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