

Intermediate Report

Introduction

Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin, aged 70 and former minister of Rural and Regional Development, is currently the political party member of United Malays National Organization (UMNO), but lost his membership in the Parliament for Shah Alam, Selangor, defeated by Khalid Abdul Samad of Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) in the general election of March 8 this year. He started his political career in 1975 as special assistant to the Prime Minister. He served as political secretary to the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad from 1981 to 1999. He was appointed as Senator for Dewan Negara in November 1999 and as Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education in December 1999. In March 2004, he was elected as member of Parliament for Shah Alam, Selangor, and then appointed as Minister of Rural and Regional Development until stepping down in March this year.



Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin

Preliminary data show that he is a staunch supporter of Mahathir and a conservative and nationalist political figure who was once quoted as criticizing "some Muslim organizations" for their demands that affect "harmony of the nation" as well as urging manufacturers to label their products in Malay, not only in English, in 2002.

In this interim report, we will first set up a few hypotheses for later testing and then some schematic steps for pursuing to find out the desired result. The hypotheses are,

- Aziz Shamsuddin obtained his political clout and reputations by adhering to Mahathir, embedded him with some risks which might haunt him later in his career as exemplified by attempted distancing by the current prime minister Abdullah.
- Aziz Shamsuddin is a typical bureaucrat who used to take advantage of any opportunity for taking credit for himself in government policies and local development.
- Aziz Shamsuddin does not have a clear appearance to general public, but is close to and welcomed by business people who benefited from his policy measures and personal relationships.
- Aziz Shamsuddin could have gotten into more distress once former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim gain more power in the future, but he should be able to resolve the impasse by his friendliness with businesses and past credibility and reputations in local development.

Aziz Shamsuddin sustained most of his political career in Kuala Lumpur (and Putrajaya), so we plan to spend more days in there gathering information. Specifically, we will try to get in touch with persons at the Ministries of Education as well as Rural and Regional Development. At the same time, we will make contact with UMNO officials and some business people. Furthermore, we will spend one or two days in Shah Alam, Aziz's representing district, for meeting with local Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) persons and some Chinese business representatives. Chinese represent a large proportion in such areas

as Kuala Lumpur and Selangor and some of them must be very close with Aziz Shamsuddin. If necessary, we will also go to Gopeng, Perak, Aziz's hometown, for some investigations.

Preliminary Findings

1. Biographic data

A. Personal Profile

Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin was born June 10, 1938 in Gopeng, Perak. He was married to Datin Asmah Hussain, who died in a car accident about ten years ago while Aziz was also injured. He was also married to Datin Seri Rosmawaty Abdul Raffar. He has four children: Mohd Nasazali, Mohd Nafrizal, Nurfatin and Nurshasha Ain.

B. Career Profile

He was a teacher after graduating from Sultan Idris Teachers' College. In his 30's, he pursued further education in the University of Malaya, where he has been president of Malay Language Society for two years, and earned B.A. degree in International Relations in 1975. He then served as special assistant to the Prime Minister and as director of National Civil Bureau. From 1981 on, he was political secretary to the Prime Minister until November 1999, when he was appointed as Senator for Dewan Negara and Deputy Minister of Education. In November 2002, he was re-appointed as senator for Dewan Negara. He won a seat in the parliament in general election of March 2004 for Shah Alam, Selangor and was appointed as Minister of Rural and Regional Development. He lost his ministership after he was defeated in general election of March this year.

In his political party career, he has been a member of UMNO for about 40 years and was Chief in Gopeng Division, Perak until September 1993. In May 2000 he was elected as member of UMNO Supreme Council until 2003. He was placed 21 out of 25 elected members. In 2001, he was defeated in Gopeng in UMNO division elections, but he later regained the position. Recently, as he's been sacked from the government, he was also reported to be giving up his post as Gopeng UMNO division chief.

C. Relations with Shafie bin Shamsuddin

We could not find any relationship, at this point of time, between Aziz Shamsuddin and Shafie bin Shamsuddin, the managing director of Carrefour Malaysia/Singapore. Malays usually are identified only by his/her first name, e.g., Aziz and Shafie, so the same second name does not mean they are related. Shafie bin Shamsuddin is the first Asian managing director appointed withing the Carrefour international chain. He graduated from Nanyang Technological University with business degree and started his career with Carrefour ten years ago. He was promoted to department head in 1997 before climbing the managing ladder very quickly through division manager, regional director in Singapore and then as managing director for Malaysia/Singapore in January 2006.



Shafie bin Shamsuddin

(To be completed)

2. Integrated Analysis

About Aziz's property possession, there is one saying that he has houses across Malaysia. And even though he has house in Shah Alam to be qualified as representing the city for the last two general elections, people claimed that he does not live in there. However, the above was reputed by some other person who claimed he was familiar with Aziz and the latter was readily available to see anyone there during weekdays and weekends, even during raya. He is a true Muslim, the same person asserted.

Since he is close to many Chinese (see below), he is not hesitant to take any opportunity to call for racial harmony as he once ask "all races" to be "sensitive" to each other's feeling and not raise "sensitive issues".

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3. Past and Present Reputations in Business, Political and Economic Aspects

A. The Anwar Event

Our preliminary finding is that Aziz Shamsuddin always acted in low profile. He was very close to Mahathir and used this closeness with the former prime minister to wield his influence in political and business spheres. The most prominent impression in the public is that he was one of the four persons named by Anwar, in his defense on sodomy charge, as master conspirator to topple him. It was reported that aziz, after he was sworn in as senator, told a news conference that he was not involved in the conspiracy to topple Anwar. In early March this year when Mahathir campaigned for Aziz in the general election, Dr. Mahathir scoffed at the suggestions that he had been influenced by Aziz in sacking Anwar Ibrahim as the deputy prime minister in 1998.

This showed the closeness between Mahathir and Aziz, as Mahathir did not campaign for all other MPs except for Aziz. On the other hand, it also awakend memories that, before the end of Anwar's trial about 6 years ago, the evidence raised by Anwar's witness named Raja Komando who mentioned that he was invited to a meeting with a few persons to plot Anwar's downfall which involved Aziz Shamsuddin. So Mahathir's special campaign trail to Shah Alam for Aziz only arouse more suspicions that he was paying back for some favor Aziz did for him about ten years ago. This also reminds people of the unexpected appointment in 1999 of Aziz Shamsuddin as Deputy Minister of Education, as he was directly linked to the conspiracy allegation brought about by Anwar Ibrahim. Of course, these will be clarified in the final report.

Anwar and his adopted brother Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja were accused of having sodomized Anwar's former family driver Azizan Abu Bakar at Sukma's apartment at Tivoli Villas, Bangsar on one night between January and March 1993. Sukma, a businessman, was also charged with abetting Anwar in sodomizing Azizan at the same time and place. Anwar was also accused by Umami Hafilda Ali who wrote a letter to mahathir in 1997 alleging that Anwar committed adultery with her sister-in-law, whose husband was Anwar's secretary at the time.

Anwar claimed he was a victim of a political conspiracy led by aides to Mahathir, who he said were behind the letter sent to Mahathir in 1997 that formed the basis of the charge against him. Anwar testified that police investigations showed that Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin, Consumer Affairs Minister Megat Junid, and Aziz Shamsuddin schemed to have the letter sent. Anwar reiterated that these allegations were "malicious, Scurrilous and irresponsible." He said Mahathir himself first showed him the letter at the time and told him to "read and destroy" it. He said he was later informed of the involvement of Aziz Shamsuddin in the Umami Hafilda affair.

Raja Kamarudin Abdul Wahid, an UMNO local branch head, testified that in 1998 Aziz Shamsuddin had instructed him to organize a campaign to politically destroy Anwar and his supporters. Aziz told Raja Kamurudin that he had been responsible for circulating the *50 Reasons Why Anwar Cannot Become Prime Minister* booklet at the 1998 UMNO national conference in which unsupported claims of Anwar's misconduct were made. Raja Kamarudin testified that Aziz alluded to a slush fund when he said that no expense should be spared in the campaign to frame up Anwar. "He said he didn't care if the operation cost millions. He told me just to send him the bill."

Anwar was defeated in Malaysian court, but some later incidents seemed to show some delayed justice. First of all, Ummi Hafilda Ali was disowned by her father before he died. And then it was Azizan Abu Bakar who crashed his car, which resulted in his wife's death. He was later arrested for khalwat (close proximity) and sentenced to six months in jail.

Now comes to Aziz Shamsuddin who too crashed his car and and his wife too died. It was reported that when they took her body to hospital they discovered a cheque for RM 3 million on her body, which was a bribe for a contract he had awarded a Chinese company. Furthermore, the Attorney-General then, who was in charge of fixing Anwar's trials, lingered into a one-year coma after falling down and hitting his head when he suffered a stroke.

Dr. Ristina Majid, another conspirator, was pissed drunk while her niece, whom she was entrusted to baby sit, drowned in the swimming pool. Her father too disowned her and he died without forgiving her for what she did to Anwar. Dr. Ristina died of a stroke in a conference in Jakarta. She in fact wanted to marry Aziz Shamsuddin but he did not want her. And Azizan Abu Bakar was for a while employed by her as her driver.

B. Relations with Hamzah Zainuddin

There is another person whom I believe is worth mentioning. His name is Datuk Hamzah Zainuddin, who is former chairman of Felcra Bhd (Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority) and now the deputy minister of Housing and Local Government. He is also a confidant of Mahathir and one of the conspirators mentioned by Anwar to topple him. He is also the UMNO division chief of Ipoh Barat, Perak, the same state where Aziz Shamsuddin also served as UMNO division chief, in Gopeng. He has bad reputation of corruption and people suspected how he could have accumulated tens of millions of ringgit of assets as revealed by a RM11.2 million divorce settlement in cash and assets to his ex-wife Nooraini Abdul Rashid in 2004.



Datuk Hamzah Zainuddin

Felcra is a government-owned land development company which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, where Aziz Shamsuddin served as the minister since 2004. In the same year, Felcra was under the investigation of Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) over an alleged graft of RM72 million awarded to its subsidiary Felcra Niaga to purchase fertilizers from China. Hamzah Zainuddin, along with several other board members had been questioned by the ACA. Felcra, since it being established in 1966, has a long history of corruption.

Some questioned what did Hamzah do for Mahathir that resulted in him being appointed the Felcra chairman in 1999. Also, despite all the suspicions of misbehavior toward Hamzah,

why Aziz still kept him on the post until October 2006 when he was replaced by Nasaruddin Hashim, an appointment also questioned by many people.
(To be completed)