

The unshackling of M'sia's rakyat
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Bersih 3.0 is probably the biggest civil protest the country has ever seen. Reports have suggested anywhere from 150,000 to 250,000.

It is hard to establish the figures but depending on which side of the fence you are sitting; I would say that it was an intimidating number of people. Definitely more than Bersih 1 and Bersih 2.

Bersih 3.0, to me was a watershed event, much like BN's loss of the two-third's majority in the 2008 general election.

Each time an event like Bersih 3 occurs the ground shakes and the fault lines open up. In 2008, the obvious changes were the new governments which took over the states of Penang, Kedah, Perak and Selangor.

Many were elated but something unseen happened in the psyche of Malaysians which shook the social structure of Malaysia.

The groundswell in 2008 loosed the shackles of fear which had gripped our fathers' generation. The deep-seated fear shackled our freedom, divided our communities, silenced our elders and compromised our faith.

Lowered voices

I recall the days when we had to lower our voices when speaking about the government in public or fear that our telephone conversations were being listened to. It was very subtle but the fear of "big brother" coming to take you away at any time under the ISA was very real and kept us all in check.

Then in March 2008, the opposition leader was a charismatic Malay man from within the establishment who had been persecuted, beaten and jailed for six years by his own Malay party.

The opposition won the popular votes in that general election and governed five states in Malaysia.

The shackles of race sensitivity were gone and suddenly Malaysians were free. It was like a spell which had been over Malaysians since 1969 were suddenly lifted.

Malaysians had a new sense of freedom and the courage to speak up in the face of injustice and corruption.

At the front lines of this new movement were young Malaysians, those 35 years and younger who had the benefit of an overseas education and who were born long after the dreaded May13

scar in Malaysian history.

The sense of freedom grew after March 2008 and there was no turning back.

Fast forward to Bersih 3.0, no one would have imagined that our Chinese elders, our fathers, those in their 50s and 60s, would go out to join a street protest as the one seen last weekend. Bersih 1 was predominantly and significantly Malay.

Bersih 2 saw more young Chinese and Indian professionals.

So gradually, there is a progressive movement of newfound sense of justice and courage in the hearts of all Malaysians.

This has proven to be a headache for the ruling coalition which is out of its league and totally clueless on how to handle and appease the new Malaysia.

So it was very encouraging to see Malaysians of all races and faces of all ages standing in unity, braving police violence and demanding for clean and fair elections.

It is no longer a communal issue but an issue of justice and fair play. Malaysians are tired of our leaders telling us what is good for us while millions are being siphoned off through kickbacks, mismanagement and corruption.

Malaysians are no longer blind, neither are they fearful. Last week's Bersih shows that Malaysia is on its way to a mature civil society and one which allows greater democratic space.

It appears, change is inevitable and if the government of the day has lost the plot and is clueless as to what is happening, they will be swept away in the next general election.

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