

**Post-Anwar era after GE13?**  
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FOCUS 505 Just one year after 13th general election, Pakatan Rakyat, the coalition that gained 52 percent of the popular votes back then, finds it has lost its shine where thorny issues, such as religious and water issues, have haunted one of the states it rules, as well as the relationship among the allies.

The past year also witnessed the coalition's failure to rebound in time to offer leadership and persuasive advocacies, as in-fighting and prosecution of its leaders have consumed much of its effort and time.

The latest issue taxing the coalition is its inability to handle the hudud controversy. All these issues have threatened to break the coalition apart, just like the Barisan Alternatif more than a decade ago.

Anwar Ibrahim, who was expected to take up the task of coordinating the differences between PAS and DAP on hudud in his role as opposition leader, failed to meet expectations with his vague stance of pleasing both parties.

The possibility of Anwar being jailed for sodomy again sparks the question of whether the country's political movement has entered a 'post-Anwar era'.

The opposition had come up with fresh ideas to reform the country and its systems after GE12 which appealed to the public and ultimately created a massive social movement for change, where the people even took the initiative to urge Malaysians overseas to come home on polling day, said political commentator Tang Ah Chai (left).

As compared with the post-GE12 period, Anwar not only formally gathered the other two parties under the flag of Pakatan, he also came up with the slogan 'Ketuanan Rakyat', which captured the imagination of the multi-ethnic society, to counter the idea of 'Ketuanan Melayu'.

GE13 has impacted Pakatan in a negative way, as there is less focus on plans to liberalise and democratise the country and system, said Tang.

Anwar's stance has not helped to resolve the hudud controversy. He has also failed to provide leadership in handling the issue, with no sign that the issue can be settled, he said.

"This shows that Malaysia is about to enter the post-Anwar era," Tang said.

While he concurs that Anwar's influence has diminished, political scientist Jayum anak

Jawan (right) links this with the progress of the mass movement to bring change to Malaysia over the last 15 years.

“If Anwar goes to prison, it means he will be out of the political frontline for about 10 years. He won’t provide the leadership,” said the deputy head of politics, security and international affairs cluster of National Council of Professors.

Inspiring a new leadership for Malaysia

“However, he has inspired a new leadership for Malaysia. That is more important than the physical man himself. Others will pick up his ideals and struggle for a more truly united Malaysia that is not based on ethnicity, religion or bigotry, but on brotherhood, equality and justice for all.

“That was what Anwar stood for in the last 20 years of his political career. This cannot be matched by any leader Malaysia has produced so far,” Jayum said.

In such a context, Anwar is not as important as before, and putting him into jail would no longer spark the nation’s fury as it did in 1998.

“It’s still too early to talk about the post-Anwar period. Pakatan had relied on individual leaders to progress further, before GE12, but the result of GE12 was achieved through collective effort,” said DAP’s Kluang parliamentarian Liew Chin Tong.

For the coalition to make a breakthrough, Liew said, Pakatan can no longer rely on the elements of leaders being oppressed, the opposition daring to face hegemony and, “we are not BN”.

Pakatan, he said, needs to come up with a collective discourse that goes beyond religious and ethnic factors, and needs to make known to the people what the coalition’s new Malaysia can offer.

After six years, Pakatan-ruled states seem to be getting too comfortable in office and bureaucracy is re-emerging in the system, he said.

To move on from the hudud dispute, Liew (right) suggested, Pakatan needs to build up its collaboration based on a common discourse, but one that is not based on the religion and race considerations.

If it fails to resolve the issue in the near future, the coalition may find that it risks losing non-Muslim votes in the two by-elections that are to be held soon, and in the next Sarawak state election.

“Since only 21 percent of the population of Sarawak are Malays, with six percent of them being Melanau and half of them being Muslims, the people cannot accept hudud and the ‘Allah’ controversy,” Jayum said.

Non-Muslims are not against hudud as the criminal law system has upheld integrity, justice and principles that match the beliefs of non-Muslim, said PAS vice-president Mahfuz Omar.

“Those against hudud are the people who misunderstand hudud,” Mahfuz said.

Meanwhile, the leaders who led the Pakatan parties for the last two generations are either ageing or retired, while DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng will not be defending his party post in the next election, which may see a leadership vacuum.

Tang especially felt the loss of DAP’s Karpal Singh, whom he said was the only one in the party who dared to speak up against all odds and criticise other leaders.

“This is just like China’s ancient official Wei Zheng and his emperor Li Shi Ming, where Wei dared to criticise his boss.

‘Someone to speak up to Kit Siang, Guan Eng’

“DAP’s biggest difficulty now is that it lacks someone who can play such a role. If the leaders say something wrong or choose the wrong path, there may not be someone to speak up against both Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng,” Tang said.

“DAP needs such (qualities in a) person, as absolute power leads to absolute corruption. If no one is there to remind and offer views, ‘he may be possessed by evil’,” he said.

PKR’s Padang Serai MP N Surendran (left) denied that Pakatan has lost direction and plans as these were stipulated in its Buku Jingga, and that they just need to further realise these plans.

“I admit we do have infighting, but this is normal in every party, as long as it does not get out of hand,” Surendran said, adding the water issue and ‘Allah’ controversy weren’t entirely the state government’s making. The federal government too has its share of responsibility for these.