

**Dyana's defeat sparks DAP soul-searching**  
**MalaysiaKini.com**  
**Aug 6, 2014**

INTERVIEW The defeat of media darling and DAP candidate Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud to Gerakan president Mah Siew Keong by a marginal 238 votes in the Teluk Intan by-election has sent the DAP on a soul-searching journey.

On this journey, the party's leaders published a series of articles in the party's internal publication, Journal of Social Democracy, discussing multiculturalism in a bid to understand how DAP lost in one of the most hard-fought by-election of the recent years.

Should DAP, whose political base is Chinese votes, reach out for non-Chinese vote and explore the 'Blue Ocean'? Or shall it stay in its 'Red Ocean' and defend the Chinese base?

Part of the band of soul-searchers, if you will, is Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong (right).

As political education director, Liew believes that the question of Chinese and Malay votes is not a zero sum game - the growth of support from one group should not be at the expense of the other.

"When there is a common ground, they (Chinese and non-Chinese votes) will be increasing simultaneously; if not, it is then a zero-sum game."

He cites the Bersih rally for clean and fair elections as an example. According to Liew, the rally had promoted "democratisation" and won over not only the Chinese and Indians, but also garnered urban Malay support.

Correspondingly, he said, the battlefield for the DAP is "democratisation and economic justice" - giving people greater participation in policy matters and things which effect their daily lives.

This is as opposed to the '3R issues' - issues surrounding religion, race and royalty - which Liew said is the mainstay of rival party Umno.

Issues such as the goods and services tax, the real estate bubble, improving the economy and wages, public transportation and public health cut across races, he said, and DAP should not entangle itself in ethnic quagmires set by Umno.

A Chinese-majority Malaysian party

Compared to the 2004 general election, where DAP gained 12 parliamentary seats and 15 state seats, the 13th general election saw DAP become the largest party in Parliament,

second to Umno which has led the ruling coalition since Independence.

Its haul in on May 5, 2013 was 38 parliamentary seats and a whopping 95 state seats. On top of that, its membership as at 2012 was about 150,000, almost double the 84,000 members it had in 2008.

In keeping with the 'Malaysian Malaysia' slogan espoused by DAP since its establishment in 1966, the party now boasts a growing number non-Chinese elected representatives.

They include Bukit Bendera MP Zairil Khir Johari, Raub MP Mohd Ariff Sabri, Mentakab assemblyperson and Pahang DAP chairperson Tengku Zulpuri Shah Raja Puji, Bukit Kawan MP Kasthuriraani Patto, Ipoh Barat MP M Kulasegaran and Bukit Gelugur MP Ramkarpal Singh.

Despite this, DAP's members are still disproportionately of Chinese ethnicity.

In his article 'Multiculturalism: The Core Value of DAP', DAP's Bilut assemblyperson Chow Yu Hui argues that DAP has in recent years tended to reduce its use of the Chinese language in favour of Bahasa Malaysia.

This, he argued, had caused some discomfort within the party, with some urging DAP to just concentrated on its traditional voters - the Chinese.

Disagreeing, Liew says: "Has Chinese votes been DAP vote bank? I became a member of DAP after the 1999 general election.

"Lim Kit Siang (left in photo) and Karpal Singh (right in photo) lost at that time, and the Chinese-speaking Chinese votes were not even half."

He argues that DAP is neither the 2.0 version of MCA and MIC, but a centre-left party for all Malaysians.

"DAP should bear in mind, we are not a Chinese-dominated party. We use Mandarin to speak for Malaysian issue. What is 'Malaysian Malaysia'? It means we could use Malay, Chinese and Tamil to speak for 'Malaysian policies'."

### Learning from PAS

Liew believes that multi-language campaign materials and events is the way to go.

"For elections, one (forum) is in Chinese and another is in Malay, there should be no problem.

"The crux of the matter, however, is what you speak for when using Mandarin? Is it economic justice and political democratisation?"

He said that although PAS emerged triumphant in the 1999 general election, it did not

reach to the middle ground, causing the creation of the two factions today.

One faction, he says, shouts 'PAS ganti Umno' (PAS replaces Umno), while another chants 'PAS for all', and this is something DAP should learn from.

Nevertheless, Liew concedes that transforming to a more multicultural party could cost DAP some supporters, such as MCA members who believe in ethnic policies.

"We have to realise, some people are just supporters of ethnic politics."

Speaking of the 'Dyana phenomenon' in the same vein, Liew is quick to point out that it is only natural that a candidate's background lends to his or her appeal to his or her own kind.

He said that when Klang MP Charles Santiago and Penang Deputy Chief Minister II P Ramasamy joined DAP between 2005 to 2007, DAP successfully reached out to Indian urban middle class.

The same can be said when Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua (right) joined in 2007 - DAP suddenly became the first choice for the English-speaking community.

"(The) Dyana (effect) is very much like Tony Pua in February, 2007," he said, pointing out that with Dyana in the fold, young Malays now see the DAP as a viable option.

"Society was seeking a young Malay voice who opposed the establishment. Dyana came from the establishment but is against it."

DAP's greatest era

In his article 'The Transformation of DAP: From Parliament to Society', political scientist Phoon Weng Keong argued that the Malaysian opposition parties are "the most conservative oppositions in East Asian oppositions are "the most conservative oppositions in East Asian authoritarian regime", and DAP is the most conservative among them.

Phoon (left) argues that as a party, DAP is overly-pragmatic, conservative and calculating, focusing too much on elections and too little on social movement.

Brushing this off, Liew said that DAP has long supported the "revolt of common citizens".

Before Pakatan Rakyat was formed, he said, DAP worked together with PKR and PAS in 2005, planning the first Bersih rally and pushing for electoral reform.

"Has DAP utterly ignored social movement? Not really. Does it emphasise on elections? It does emphasise on the elections, otherwise it would not be able to survive."

The DAP is now living one of its greatest era, he says, so it must set its own agenda and let

BN follow suit, instead of being manipulated by Umno like before.

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Sourcehttp: <http://www.malysiakini.com/news/270726>