

## **Anwar's jailing will spell Umno's own doom**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**Oct 27, 2014**

COMMENT At one Umno general assembly, a delegate boldly declared that Umno will continue in "perpetuity", or words to the effect.

Anyone who believes in the power of the Almighty will quickly realise that even His little finger can sink an entire Titanic, what more a party made of mortals.

In politics, as we know it, nothing is perpetual. There is no kingdom or empire that lasts forever. They come and go, and unless a political party is willing to undergo reformation from within, and remain relevant to the people who give it their support, the party is in danger of becoming obsolete.

We have seen one regime after another in the Middle East in recent years collapsing. Closer to home, Suharto's Golkar regime collapsed. This followed after the People's Movement in the Philippines where President Ferdinand Marcos (right) was ousted.

In this series of articles, I shall lay out five reasons why I believe Umno is on the verge of collapse if its leaders continue to resist the wind of change. These articles are based on published information that is easily available in the public domain.

It is time for Umno leaders to do some soul-searching, instead of putting up their defence system and argue against the points that I will endeavor to elaborate in this series.

First reason

In 1998, when then-prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad sacked his nemesis Anwar Ibrahim, the sentiment against Mahathir was at an all-time high.

It had affected mainly the Malay population, who came out to support Anwar. In retrospect, Mahathir is to be blamed for splitting the Malay race. Without a doubt, Anwar's trial and subsequent imprisonment had also made an impact on both the Chinese and Indian community.

Although the Chinese populace took a 'wait-and-see' attitude, the Malays were divided because the injustices done to Anwar. Anwar, being a charismatic leader, was being arrested like a criminal, beaten up and finally thrown into prison during the Mahathir regime.

Contrary to the popular opinion floated by other writers, I believe the reason Keadilan came into being as a party was as a result of people feeling it was time to challenge the dictatorial rule of one man and the party he created.

When Anwar was in prison, the perception of the people towards the government gradually changed. Many of us who were watching the political developments during that time were beginning, albeit slowly, to lose our confidence in the BN government.

Like it or not, this was the beginning of the Reformasi movement. Although it mainly involved the Malay patriots, this represents the first wave of change. People were saying, "Enough is enough!" They want to see changes to the system. They were unhappy with cronyism and nepotism exercised by the government.

Taking the cue that he was no longer going to enjoy the support of the people, Dr Mahathir finally stepped down in 2004. It was his more amicable successor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was able to bring some healing to the land and its people.

However, the injustice done to Anwar has already opened the people's eyes to see Dr Mahathir's own wickedness. The findings by the royal commission of inquiry on Anwar's blue black eye also raised questions about the integrity of both former inspector-general of police Rahim Noor and Dr Mahathir himself.

Although Dr Mahathir was supposed to have retired in 2003, he did not give the opportunity to his successor, Abdullah (otherwise known as Pak Lah) to run the country. Abdullah, who was seen as the hope for this country, turned out to be weak, not because he was a bad leader, but that the people under him were already too used to the Mahathir style of managing the country.

One good example was the way how then-home minister Syed Hamid Albar used the Internal Security Act (ISA) to arrest a Sin Chew journalist who had merely reported the speech by an Umno leader in Penang, who called the Chinese and other communities 'pendatang'. Instead of being charged, the government decided to let him go 'scot free'; instead, the journalist was arrested.

When it was clear that Pak Lah was unable to deliver on his promises, the people saw there were no other paths to take but to go down to the streets. All these years, while the discontentment was brewing, Anwar was still in prison, but PKR under the leadership of his wife, Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, grew in strength.

The Hindraf movement is probably one of the early manifestations of this feeling of discontentment against the BN regime. For the first time, on Nov 25, 2007, the Indian poor and their champions decided it was time for them to demand for their rights. This is what I call the second wave, which was made up of mainly the Indians.

When the Hindraf demonstration was crushed, and several hundred Hindraf members were injured, once again, those of us who were sitting on the fence and watching the Hindraf street demonstration decided something was amiss in the way how the Indian poverty was addressed.

These were the Indian poor who realised that their ancestors were 'conned' into relocating to Malaya, and given the task to build the railway lines. They had felt cheated. Till today, they are still the underprivileged group in the country, yet their grievances went on deaf years.

Finally, the crunch came when Bersih 2.0 again hit the road on Nov 10, 2007, where it was estimated between 30,000 to 50,000 people had turned up on the streets of Kuala Lumpur. The participation of civil society, under the leadership of former Bar Council president Ambiga Sreenevasan, was the turning point in the history of this country.

This is what had determined the outcome of the 2008 general election, touted the Political Tsunami by some, where, for the first time, the new Pakatan Rakyat coalition experienced landslide victory in a number of states.

The Anwar factor

Most people I speak to believe that the Anwar factor in the change formula is very significant.

The more Anwar and his family members are being persecuted, like in the lead up to the 2013 general election, the people, in particular, the Chinese community took sides with Pakatan. Everywhere Anwar went, for the first time, the Chinese were coming out in droves to listen to him.

They may not think Anwar is an angel, but in their minds, they cannot deny that it is only Anwar who has the tenacity to fight on, despite spending six years in prison.

Other deputy prime ministers such as Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Musa Hitam (right) had wilted away when they could not outwit Mahathir. But Anwar, having gone to jail, was becoming more powerful by the day.

At around the same time, DAP's Lim Guan Eng was also sent to jail. When both were finally released, there was a lot more clout in the things that they had to say about the regime that has used the courts to throw them into prison.

For the first time, Pak Lah's own popularity as a prime minister was overshadowed by Anwar. At the same time, Pak Lah, who was suffering an onslaught from his own predecessor, was unable to deliver the silver lining that he had promised.

That proved to be another costly lesson for Umno and Barisan Nasional, when in the 2008 general election, BN suffered big losses.

Again, under Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, the promises of reform were never delivered. Instead, things got cornier by the day. Anwar was portrayed as a homosexual, and as someone who had sex with a Chinese prostitute. Anwar was also labelled a spy for the Jews and the Americans.

Meanwhile, civil society was demanding clean and fair elections. Although the parliamentary select committee had released a report of their findings on electoral reform in April 2012, the Dewan Rakyat passed the report, without giving time for the lawmakers to debate on the findings.

On April 28, 2012, some 300,000 people turned up on the streets of Kuala Lumpur for Bersih 3.0 rally, instead, Najib dismissed the Bersih 3.0 as “merely wanting to paint a negative image of the government to the world and confront the police so that they could throw allegations of police brutality to the public.”

Subsequently, in the 2013 general election, the so-called Chinese tsunami hit the peninsula by surprise. For the first time, the Chinese were willing to vote for PAS, and the Malays were voting for DAP. This is the third wave of change.

In all, Anwar’s imprisonment for six years, and both Sodomy I and II trials, have opened Umno’s Pandora’s box for all to see.

They have tried that to Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and a number of great leaders in the past. Even closer to home, they have done it to Hindraf’s founding leader P Uthayakumar. Immediately after he was released, Uthayakumar urged the Indians to vote for Pakatan Rakyat.

While their leaders may be in prison, the movement started by these great leaders never died until they saw a change of regime. It has happened in South Africa, India, the Middle East; there is no reason to believe that Umno will be perpetual if it continues to resist change.

Anwar’s next round of imprisonment, although meant to finish him off politically, and the number of sedition cases against the members of the opposition and civil society, will therefore spell Umno and the BN coalition’s own doom.