

Regarding Najib's two scenarios if Harapan wins
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"The world is a tragedy to those who feel, but a comedy to those who think."

- Horace Walpole

COMMENT | Normally when Umno posits a Pakatan Harapan win, it is veiled threats of ethnic discord and financial ruin. However, when the current Umno president and Malaysian prime minister claims that the two horrors that await us if Harapan wins are betrayal and nepotism, well, that should bring a big sigh of relief for the Harapan faithful and Malaysians who vote.

Since nobody has defined what a Harapan "win" actually constitutes, I will paint it in broad strokes in the spirit of all the propaganda floating around during this election season. In reality, these two scenarios of a fantasy win actually are not all doom and gloom, which is pretty bizarre for the apocalyptic prophecies propagated by the establishment and the opposition if either side wins.

Betrayal and nepotism? Really? That's it? No blood on the streets? No Malay institutions crumbling under the assault of treacherous Malay proxies of the evil DAP? No chaos, or in the words of Dr Peter Venkman (from the original 'Ghostbusters'), "...dogs and cats living together... mass hysteria!". What Malaysians can look forward to if Harapan manages to take Putrajaya is political betrayal and nepotism? That is it?

Also, I never realised there was a "most critical level" of nepotism. What other kinds of levels are there? Safe? Moderate? Low? If Harapan enters the "most critical level" of nepotism, what are the other levels which Umno or opposition supporters for that matter, find acceptable before reaching the "most critical level"?

C'mon, nepotism is rife in Southeast Asian politics. It is rife in Umno and it is practiced in the opposition. Does anyone from either base care when this happens? Nope. Indeed, in most Southeast Asian democracies, nepotism is a given, which is why I suppose the Umno big cheese can define nepotism as entering the "most critical level" without even giving a thought about how dumb this sounds.

Remember to most partisan, nepotism is bad in theory but in practice it is okay if those involved deliver on whatever the base thinks important. Honestly, nepotism in politics is everywhere, so making this claim that nepotism reaching "a most critical level" if political prisoner Anwar Ibrahim and his wife, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, assume the PM and DPM post does not carry much weight.

In fact, I would argue that this would be a fairytale ending for the couple and would be embraced by the vast majority of opposition supporters. Sure, there would be sour grapes in the opposition and of course, the internal schisms in PKR would flare up but all this is part and parcel of mainstream Malay politics. The heady atmosphere of a Harapan win would ensure the honeymoon period of this "most critical level of nepotism" would extend for some time.

As for political betrayal, how much betrayal does the former prime minister have left in him, anyway? Betrayal takes effort, and I would think that after showing Umno the door, the old maverick, with a crap-eating grin on his face, would put in place strategies and connive alliances that would ensure that the family business endures long after he retires, yet again.

But even if there was betrayal, so what? I am sorry, but betrayal is what this opposition is used. PAS betrayed the opposition. Numerous political operatives in good standing betrayed the opposition. Heck, even Hannah Yeoh (*photo*), a powerbroker in her last piece claimed that she wished she had sunscreen to protect herself against betrayal.

Meanwhile, the history of Umno is littered with the political corpse of those who attempted to reach the highest levels of power and were thwarted and betrayed by cunning political operatives, whose own fortunes sunk in the tumultuous sea of mainstream Malay politics.

M'sians would not care

If Mahathir betrays Anwar, what does anyone think will happen? That the alliance falls apart? That politicians will choose a side and risk everything they have worked and fought so hard for all these years? Not likely.

In this fantasy Harapan win, Bersatu would become stronger with all the Umno political operatives jumping ship. Bersatu which has made no secret of remaining a "pure" Malay party would accept anyone into its ranks, especially those from Umno and this would make the positions of other parties like PKR weaker.

But, of course, people would not care. Umno has been defeated, right? We have our two-party - or maybe just one, again - system. I believe that after some noise, people would rationalise that Anwar has served his purpose and sacrifices have to be made in this new dawn of Malaysian politics. People will forget or choose to forget, and this idea that there will be squabbling that threatens Harapan governance is overblown. Umno has had bigger internal schisms and it has thrived.

As for “serving the rakyat”, all politics is local, so in the states where Harapan controls, the big money states of Penang and Selangor, they have done a good a job or better than Umno - depending on who you ask - so this idea that Harapan cannot serve the rakyat, even though they have been squabbling all the way, is ludicrous.

Hence, if Harapan with all its problems can manage the money states and at the same time deal with the Umno hegemon and these states do not break down into a chaotic mess, I think Harapan even when it wins - however one defines it - would be able to manage all the other states.

I would assume with all the noisy agitations of urban non-Malays muted in the Malay heartlands, Harapan would be able to easily slide into the Umno template of feudalism, political patronage and racial privilege that we are told is the backbone of mainstream Malay politics. I mean if PAS, a so-called “opposition” party can govern Kelantan, then why not a supposed (pre-1969) alliance style coalition, which is what Harapan claims to be?

Remember in the good old days of Pakatan Rakyat, the ‘PAS for all’ was good enough to rule Kelantan and was simpatico with the supposed Chinese-dominated opposition, run by proxies of political prisoner Anwar, or Umno has us believe. Indeed, there was too much simpatico if you ask me, but since nobody defined this “win”, I assume that Harapan would have no problems with a religious party like Amanah governing the state of Kelantan, for example.

The bureaucracy will fall into place especially since the old maverick had stamped his imprimatur on it a long time ago. There will be problems, of course, but Harapan would be operating on the goodwill of supporters who would give them a lot of breathing room because after decades of Umno rule, change takes time, as we are constantly reminded.

Now if this sounds like a nightmare to Umno, well, all I can say, they are not the only ones.