

PKR assembly a political boost for Anwar
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Was it a blessing in disguise or a strategy by Anwar Ibrahim in the just recently concluded Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) general assembly? The incumbent president of the party (his wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail) was given a walk-over and the two other candidates (Anwar and Abdul Rahman Osman) decided at the final melodramatic moment to withdraw from contesting for the president's post. The Registrar of Society (ROS) played its supporting role on the eve of the assembly by informing Anwar about his and the party's predicament if he contested in the party election.

A Machiavellian, Anwar on the whole succeeded in giving PKR good publicity. Unprecedented publicity was given throughout the three-day general assembly both by the local and foreign media. There were some minor hiccups leading to the climax of the event though but soon after, the dust began to settle and seemingly the delegates closed ranks. The party and Anwar were unscathed after a storm in a tea cup and have emerged more appealing and stronger than before.

The party is now steered by none other than its de facto leader, Anwar, although he is not the president of the party. It makes little difference, though. This relatively young multi-racial political party has since its existence been goaded on by Anwar.

No matter how Anwar is perceived by his friends and political foes, he is definitely not a spent force in Malaysian politics. He still has the charisma and is capable of drawing huge crowds as a good orator. He is capable of mesmerising the crowd with his oratory skills. He still has a sizeable following in the country and is well accepted by friends and leaders abroad. If truth be told, Anwar cannot be easily erased from the local political scene. It's an irrefutable fact that Anwar has an insuppressibly optimistic personality.

He can be, by and large, be perceived as a freak with the intelligence and political skills not many politicians can match. Thus, he has emerged more popular than ever after the recent PKR party general assembly. Despite all the political bashing and the disparaging remarks made against him by the local media and blogs, he has emerged unshaken and much sturdier.

Politics is a matter of perception. In fact, no amount of character assassination and insinuations will bring down a seasoned politician. Many politicians, including those in the ruling coalition, have emerged to become leaders despite all the allegations against them. Anwar, in particular, has been exposed to continuous character assassination by his adversaries, but ironically the more this has seemed to have fortified his political path. Anwar just appears to have gained more sympathy and popularity despite the relentless onslaught against him.

The political scene leading to the next general election is going to be more interesting. Anwar's offensive against politicians in the ruling coalition relating to many issues such as corruption, accountability and many other social delinquencies is not going to recede.

The media and their politicians thus should debate more on economic and social issues affecting the country rather than harping on trivial, unfounded and perceived notions of another's personal character.

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