

Selangor Pakatan sets the pace
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COMMENT The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

The Selangor Pakatan Rakyat government this week took two important strides towards the coalition's avowed objective of thoroughgoing reform of the body politic.

By passing a Freedom of Information Act (FOI), albeit one that is short of the desired ideal, and by appointing an opposition member chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee, though he appears skeptical about the whole thing, Khalid Ibrahim's government has, with these two steps, set the Pakatan compass unerringly towards true north.

It's easy to dismiss the actions as paltry and insignificant in the face these days of the welter of Umno's attacks on everything Pakatan.

khalid ibrahim pc 120809 02Presently, it seems in the Umno view that there is nothing Pakatan can do right, particularly the PKR-led division of it.

From newsletter publication to sand mining to water supply, the airwaves are suffused with excoriations of Pakatan's incompetence.

In this attacking frenzy, some of which is self-inflicted, pace the rivalry between PKR's Khalid Ibrahim and Azmin Ali, it's easy to forget that Pakatan is supposed to be about the promise of better governance.

In Penang, Kelantan, Kedah, Selangor, and for 11 months (between March 2008 and February 2009) in Perak, Pakatan has done enough to sustain hope that they can deliver on the promise.

Otherwise would Pakatan have won eight out of 11 by-elections since the March 2008 tsunami?

'Fat and flabby'

Now with Selangor Pakatan's double stride of a FOI and an opposition-chaired PAC, a good governance gap (Triple G) between Pakatan governed states and Umno-BN becomes distinctly visible.

An FOI and an opposition-chaired PAC are anathema to Umno-led governments.

Four decades ago, the late Dr Tan Chee Khoo, 'Mr Opposition', if not by title then by bearing, described the Alliance-led government, predecessor of the present one, as "fat and flabby", in a putdown that was pointed and - in light of a disclosure this week - prophetic.

Yesterday's disclosure in Parliament that the department of Prime Minister Najib Razak commandeered a budget of RM4 billion and staff of 43,000 was simply mind-boggling.

Things have obviously grown astronomically since the days of Chee Khoo's putdown.

Could the Umno attacking frenzy vis-a-vis Pakatan be due to a growing suspicion that the electorate is coming round to Chee Khoo's view?

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