

**No 2 fight: Who owns PKR?**  
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COMMENT The question runs like a refrain in the campaign rhetoric of Anwar Ibrahim: "Who owns Malaysia?"

It comes up within minutes of the PKR supremo's arrival at the podium after the emcee has introduced him to an expectant crowd.

NONEExpert at reading their sentiments, Anwar swiftly dispenses greetings to all and sundry, acknowledges the work put in by the organisers, goes on to say something that shows he knows the crowd has been waiting patiently to hear him, before easing into the part where he connects them to the burning issues of the day.

As campaign theatre this is high entertainment at no cost to listeners, though sometimes it entails the purchase of a reasonably priced dinner ticket.

Introduction, preamble, middle and finale are all tied in a rhetorical rhapsody that sees the crowd moving for the exits the minute Anwar stops and leaves for the next campaign stop.

You can't blame the crowd for not waiting to hear the next speaker on the bill. It's like the hungry after having dined well; sated, they want to leave to avoid cloying the appetite.

But unlike satisfied diners, there's nothing torpid about the exiting. Instead, despite the sometimes late hour, the departing are enthused, maybe even invigorated, courtesy of the speaker who in anything from 30 to 50 minutes has imbued them with concern and the audacity of hope for change, to borrow from Barack Obama.

Often, the thing that has spurred them to want change is the question: "Who owns Malaysia?"

The plunder of Malaysia's wealth

These days it runs like a leitmotif through the campaign rhetoric of Anwar Ibrahim.

He expertly threads variations on that theme through all his speeches. It's winning because it succeeds in pumping up the audience's adrenalin.

They believe their country matters because the speaker has subtly stoked their proprietary rights. He has spoken like he would be irresponsible if he sat on his hands and didn't do anything about the plunder of Malaysia's wealth by the relatives and cronies of the leaders of Umno-BN.

Because the speaker has gone to jail and is always the target of some court case or other where the rights of the defense are always secondary to the claims of the prosecution, the crowd believes that the speaker is justified in raising their concerns. They too ought to do something about saving the country that they and the speaker own.

The crowd knows that the speaker is not wealthy, not ostentatiously at least; that his wife and children are not decked in gold; that his other relatives have not waxed rich; that his friends and cronies have not unreasonably benefitted from his time as a biggie in 16 past years in Umno.

So they believe him when he says he cannot, in conscience, allow all the plunder to pass without his protest, in jail or out of it. The crowd believes the speaker has suffered and continues to suffer for the sake of ideals. They believe him.

Matching deed to word

As all know, inspirational campaign rhetoric is all glitter but the real gold lies in what is done after the speeches have ended and it's time to match deed to word.

NONE In the internal election process just started in PKR, a question that has crept stealthily into the reckoning, now that it's clear there is going to be a contest for the No 2 post, casts an ironic shadow over the winning "Who owns Malaysia?" campaign theme of its de facto leader.

The matter will soon devolve around this: if PKR has husband Anwar as party supremo, wife Azizah as party president, and crony Azmin Ali as party deputy president, what would the answer be to the question – "Who owns PKR?"

How would an answer like 'Anwar Ibrahim Sendirian Berhad' (the English equivalent: 'Messrs Anwar Ibrahim and Co') play in Permatang, whatever.

It's not too late for higher-ups in PKR to stop and consider the consequences of their loss of a sense of self-irony.

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