

Reformasi support not necessarily Anwar support
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Helmy Haja Mydin

In refer to the letters by K Temoc and Ramu Rathkum and the article by Manjit Bhatia.

When Anwar Ibrahim was sacked and arrested during the latter part of the 1990s, I remember my teacher bursting into tears whilst in class as she sobbed about the fact that the Malays had lost such a great Muslim leader, and the 'firaun' had won. She then urged us to show our dissatisfaction by participating in the 'reformasi' movement and to make our voices heard.

Of course, she automatically assumed that we were sharing her grief. For better or worse, most of us went on with our daily lives with the impression that the No 2 had challenged the No 1 and lost. And he had to pay the price.

Whilst I condemned the misuse of the judiciary in the disposal of Anwar's political career, I dispelled the hubris that he 'rose up against the government' for the altruistic purpose of promoting truth and justice. My friends and I had a simple question – why had he not walked this talk back when he was in power?

Why wait until he (or his supporters rather) lost a political coup that was instigated in the midst of an international economic crisis? If he had started (in his various capacities as education and finance minister) the 'reformasi' before being kicked out, he would have been held in much higher stead.

So do not mistake support for the 'reformasi' as being automatically a sign of support for Anwar Ibrahim. Some individuals were just lashing out against the injustice of the system as opposed to being diehard fans of the man (then again, there are individuals like that teacher of mine).

We are asked by Ramu Rathkum to forgive the man's past and work with him for the future, which is all fine and dandy if he only acknowledges his various mistakes. If not, he is just another politician who is working at the angle that suits him best. Admittedly, he is one of the more charismatic and intellectual figures in the local political scene and since the retirement of the Tun, I am hard-pressed to think of another politician who is on par with his verbosity.

At the end of the day however, the opposition does not constitute Anwar only. In order for the electorate to be convinced that a change in regime should be instituted, they will need an inkling into the ethos and mechanisms of whatever coalition that intends to come into power.

There is more to being in the opposition than pointing out what's wrong. All of us 'teh tarik' politicians can do that. What we need is a viable alternative, and it's more than just replacing Abdullah Ahmad Badawi with Anwar.

Idealism and pragmatism are not good bedfellows. If DAP and PAS cannot even agree on a cohesive policy prior to any by-election, what more if they come into power? What about fiscal and monetary policies? And is PAS agreeable to the abolishment of special Malay privileges, which Anwar has been recently touting as being outdated?

Will a mechanism be put in place to ensure that the playing field will be balanced for those in the lower end of the socioeconomic level? Let's not even start on the issue of an Islamic state.

I could go on with more of the ponderable, but without a shadow cabinet and a comprehensive policy of governance by the opposition party, most of us will go ahead with the evil that we know. The only way BN will lose its majority anytime soon is if the economy is catastrophically mismanaged.

So perhaps it is time that other individuals are also brought forward to share the spotlight.

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