

Ball at Umno's feet needs to be kicked correctly
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Rakyat Malaysia

It has been two weeks now since the results of the election were announced. The rakyat have spoken out and it was a resounding victory for the opposition in five states. After more than 50 years of independence we, the rakyat, have finally dared to take the risk of voting in the opposition in four west-coast states and retaining the status quo of PAS governing in Kelantan.

The reasons for the defeat were many (I was surprised BN did not see them or perhaps chose not to) but Tun Mahathir hit the nail on the head when he aptly summed up the election results as Malaysians voting in the opposition not because they were pro-opposition but rather because they were anti-Barisan. For non-Muslims, they were more anti-Umno than ever before.

Statements made by Umno politicians (mind you, not by PAS members) infuriated the silent moderate Malaysians and matters were made worse when the other communal parties in Barisan were seen as servile and submissive. This scenario was in great contrast to the dethroned BN in Penang when Umno leaders (who preached tolerance, peace and security) quickly responded when they led street demonstrations to voice anger towards the new Penang CM on the NEP.

From the aftermath of this election, I saw a true sporting gentleman in Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon the ex-CM of Penang who conceded defeat and attended the swearing-in ceremony of DAP's Lim Guan Eng as chief minister (Talk about sore losers. None of the Umno state reps attended the swearing-in ceremony).

It must have taken a lot of guts for him to voice out in public against the street demonstrations led by Umno. One wonders why BN politicians like him have not been seen to be vocal on such issues prior to the election. He should know all too well Umno's arm-twisting tactics in Penang. He himself also faced the wrath and high-handedness of Umno during his tenure as Penang CM for 18 years.

One question that needs to be addressed is whether the Malays are generally marginalised in Penang. Are they alienated from participating in the business sectors? Are they worse off than the Malays in BN-led states such as Perlis, Negeri Sembilan or Sabah? In politics, perception by the rakyat is crucial.

The DAP-led government must ensure fairness and in the eyes of the Malay community, the new government must be seen to be working together to alleviate the problems faced by the 'neglected' Malays in Penang. If it wants to gain Malay votes in the next general election, it has to uplift the standard of living among the Malays and turn them into successful entrepreneurs.

Four or five years in power before the next state election is definitely a short time to accomplish what BN has not been able to do for the Penang Malays in the past 50 years but should such a challenging feat be achieved then Umno will soon face extinction in the Pearl of the Orient.

DAP leaders must also be careful with what they say and not hurt the feelings of the other

races. I totally agree with Pak Lah who advised caution on opinions relating to sensitive issues by the opposition leaders. How I wish he would say the same to his 'little Napoleons' in his previous cabinet. DAP should not repeat the mistakes of the BN when certain quarters trample and infringe on the religious rights of the non-Muslims. Consequently, BN suffered a backlash from the non-Muslims.

The young sizeable new voters are not easily swayed by paltry donations to Chinese and Tamil schools on the eve of every general election. They are more well-read and obtain information not only from the controlled press and government media. It is one thing to be told that price hikes for oil, food items and utilities is inevitable but it is definitely another thing to read and realise that Petronas, Tenaga and Telekom are reporting huge profits annually. In fact, the well-read Malay intellectuals can also see the many flaws in the implementation of NEP. It has led to prevalent corruption and cronyism in the system.

All is not lost for BN. Like Pak Lah says, BN is still a credible force to be reckoned with. In all fairness, BN has done a lot for all the races in developing Malaysia. It is not difficult for BN to wrest back power from the opposition. It's more of BN's doing (arrogance, over-confidence and short-sightedness) rather than the any of the opposition's popularity or strength.

BN, and in particular, Umno can still go on in a state of self-denial. It can also keep finding scapegoats for the disastrous defeat. But on the other hand, it can re-invent itself and do some soul-searching. We, the rakyat have given you a clear warning and hope you have learnt your lesson.

We have broken the psychological barrier and will not be cowed anymore by your constant reminders of the May 13 incident. Umno must know that the actions and statements by its leaders have direct and adverse consequences on the popularity of the other component parties within BN.

The ball is now at Umno's feet. Kick it correctly and you score victory in Pak Lah's lucky number 13 general election. Refusal to heed to rakyat's voices will see BN being kicked out for good.

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