

On eve of political liberation, Anwar is in a forgiving mood

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On the eve of his liberation from elective constraints, PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim chose to ruminate on his predicament through the lens of Roman stoic philosopher Epictetus who warned that every human situation is like a vase with two handles.

anwar pc in hong kong 130208For instance, if you are the victim of some injustice, you can either grasp the handle of your victimisation or you can grasp the handle that looks behind the injustice to its causes and aim to remove them.

"I see all my efforts since my release from prison as grasping the handle that looks to the factors behind my victimisation and the need to remove them," he said in remarks to Malaysiakini during a pause in a hectic schedule as chairman-in-waiting of the newly formed Pakatan Rakyat, or People's Alliance, the fledgling coalition of PKR, DAP and PAS that jointly holds 82 seats in Parliament and controls five state legislatures.

Tomorrow, the PKR leader is freed of a five-year ban that disqualified him from elective office following a conviction for corruption handed down on April 14, 1999.

In opposition circles, the earlier date has come to acquire an aura of infamy, in the way perhaps June 4, 1989, the date of the Tiananmen Square massacre is to Chinese students, or similar episodes in recent history that are markers highlighting the beginning of a new epoch or new consciousness.

The reformasi movement in Malaysia took its rise from Anwar's travails in September 1998 and PKR, the political party it spawned, got its start in April 1999.

Anwar said he had no reason to pick at the scab of his recent past of six years in jail and expose the wound of his incarceration on what now increasingly seem trumped-up charges of corruption and sodomy.

"While it's true that life must be understood backward, it must be lived forward," said Anwar, quoting the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard.

"I've no desire to dwell on the past to fault-find or fix the blame," he continued. "Life is too short to be small."

Traitor to Indonesia

As an indication of his thinking, Anwar, who last week delivered the keynote address on the centenary of the birth of Hamka (below), the renowned Indonesian Islamic scholar, cited a quotation from Hamka with which he closed his speech at Muhammadiyah University in Jakarta:

hamka haji abdul malik karim amrullah indonesian writer"The shifting sands of time render all things impermanent. Some will rise and some will fall. As for me, just as I have come, I too shall leave this worldly life which alternates between joy and grief... and even as I fall victim to my oppressors' wrong, whose tyranny knows no bounds drunk as they are with

power, they ought to know that they too will also fade into oblivion... as for those who have vilified me and sullied my name and my honour with their boundless hate and envy ... this much I can offer them: to err is human, to forgive divine..."

Hamka (1908-81), who was imprisoned by Sukarno on trumped-up charges of being a traitor to the country, forgave his nemesis and moved on to become one of the leading lights in the cultural and political reform movement of the region.

Nearing the end of his period of exclusion from elective office, Anwar, in quoting this passage, has shown his magnanimity of spirit, harbouring neither ill-will nor animosity towards his detractors and adversaries.

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