

**DAP - the daring dreamer**  
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Politics can be stranger than fiction-only. Some political analysts have argued that the multi-dimensional crisis facing the country have shaped Malaysian voters into thinking individuals.

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Mounting cost-push inflation, an incompetent government, a judiciary lacking transparency, deteriorating corruption in the corridors of power are but some of the rots plaguing the nation's political, social and economic affairs.

Some critics shared the view that political conspiracies had played a catalyst role in changing the character and destiny of opposition political parties in recent years.

dap penang mega rally 060308 crowd5It is against this political backdrop that the 42-year-old DAP was given a new lease of life.

Others argued that the opposition party's newly found success was due to its increasing appeal among voters after the 2004 general election with its elected representatives successfully articulating some of the public's deepest grievances, such as rampant corruption, abuses of power, sheer incompetent governance of the Barisan Nasional under Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

### **The Anwar factor**

Paradoxically, DAP's recent success is arguably linked to what is popularly called the Anwar-factor, the man who many felt was responsible for cementing the cooperation and trust among the top echelon leadership of the Pakatan Rakyat coalition.

anwar ibrahim lim kit siang hadi awangHow many Malaysians can still remember that in 1997, DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang had sent a letter to Anwar Ibrahim (who was then Umno deputy president and acting-prime minister) on a "10-point consensus of a round-table conference on corruption."

Lim had called for greater transparency in funding political parties, a free and investigative press, a new culture of integrity in political life, among other proposals.

Eleven years on, the political divide took a convergent path from fiction to reality sharing a common ideological platform.

The first alleged political conspiracy against Anwar, the changing of the guard in the Umno leadership and exposure of the rot in the judiciary system, ultimately rewrote the destiny of opposition parties.

Presently, DAP is firmly entrenched as part of the Pakatan coalition governing Penang with its future destiny so tenaciously linked to PKR de facto leader Anwar, who is currently contesting in the Permatang Pauh by-election.

## **Will the new be just as tough?**

Will the new generation of DAP leaders be as "tough" and resilient as the "old guards"?

In the coming national congress, some 44 new faces out of 58 will contest against 29 incumbents for places in the Central Executive Committee (CEC). Among the new hopefuls of parliamentarians are Tony Pua, Liew Chin Tong, Hannah Yeoh and Jeff Ooi.

Only three new faces are Malays namely Khairul Annuar Ahmad, Ahmad Ton and Zulkifli Mohd Noor. A scenario that will see DAP unlikely being able to rebut its "Chinese-ness" brand or perceived Chinese chauvinist image in the near term.

Otherwise, DAP is no ordinary multi-racial opposition party. Its incumbent leaders unlike those of MCA leaders in government who tend to bask in their comfort zones, often have to take all the hard knocks and falls from a hostile government regime in an oppressive environment.

Many DAP leaders in a span of more than three decades evidently have become victims characterised by detention under the Internal Security Act, suffered from political and legal prosecution through trumped up legal charges.

dap penang grand rally 070308 womenYet despite for all its organisational abilities and a target of human injustice, the past DAP leadership also suffered from many of its own inherent contradictions.

Some clues may lie in DAP's evolutionary history. The party has long been labelled by its arch rival MCA as being "dictatorial" openly criticising Lim for his iron-fist rule when the latter was serving as secretary general. Lim later served as national chairman from 1999 to 2004. Karpal Singh is currently the national DAP chairman.

But DAP has bounced back despite having lost its position as the leading opposition party in parliament after the 1999 general election. Its recent increasing appeal among voters has enabled the party to recruit, groom and nurture more qualified and younger leaders into the party's fold which MCA has failed miserably.

## **Dreaming a Malaysian dream**

This opposition party has a dream since 1996 - a Malaysian dream.

In fact, all political parties in this country have their respective dreams. Some promised us dreams but they remain just as that, dreams. In part, the Malaysian dream under the BN rule is steadily becoming a nightmare.

Others never have the courage to try them out. Out of fear-fear of failure and danger. Most component BN leaders of MCA, Gerakan and MIC, fear they will lose everything they have now, the perks and positions in government.

But not this opposition party. DAP, like an explorer, it takes risks and pushes aside the perils of political prosecution and jail sentences. Noted for striking electoral pacts one after another despite failures, facing one obstacle after another, DAP keeps pushing on its political agenda.

It is against this political background that the party's 15th national congress will be held with some 952 delegates evaluating the party's performance for the past year.

dap penang grand rally 070308 whistleThe party's congress meets once in three years, when it is called the "party national congress," or at such times as it is convened by the CEC or at the request of 60 percent of the party's branches.

Delegates to the party's congress are selected by their respective branches. The CEC consists of 20 members and delegates duties and responsibilities to a 10-member central working committee.

The CEC also elects from among themselves a national chairman, a national deputy chairman, up to five national vice-chairmen, a secretary-general and other office holders. (Lim Guan Eng has one more term remaining to serve as secretary general).

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