

**Umno in desperate damage-control mode**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**Aug 26, 2008**  
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To quite a substantial number of Umno leaders, the fight in Permatang Pauh was more of a damage -control.  
MCPX

Some of them even suggested to 'boycott' the by-election as a face-saving measure, losing confidence in themselves.

Umno/BN did not promise the fuel-price hike, but they did the increase the fuel price soon after the last general election with the biggest margin we had ever seen in any oil-exporting country in the world so far.

The increase was done through the prime minister's announcement and within 24 hours, though it was touched-up to look good through a parliamentary debate and voting only as an after- thought for obvious reasons.

The people are questioning why an increase of fuel price could be made almost instantly, whereas any decrease would have to 'wait and see' till September this year, even though the petrol price had already dropped from US\$135 to US\$115 per barrel in the world market.

Anwar Ibrahim already announced that if the Pakatan Rakyat formed the next federal government today, the petrol price shall be decreased tomorrow by 70 sen to RM2 per litre in Malaysia for domestic consumption.

This is, in fact, is a prudent measure to ease the burden of the people and to rejuvenate our ailing economy.

Now BN leaders, who hold that a decrease in fuel price is impossible, change their tune to say that any one can decrease the fuel prices, but they as a responsible government they would not do it.

Whereas to Pakatan Rakyat, it is irresponsible to increase fuel prices to feed corruption and cronyism, and they would decrease them. They also felt that they should do it precisely because of their responsibility to the people.

One thing for sure, people will not buy Information Minister Shabery Cheek's idea that an increase in fuel price will not see an increase in the inflation rate. The inflation rate now is a good 7.7% in Malaysia according to the World Bank, though it was announced by the government as a mere 3.5% earlier.

Many thought Umno and BN would as a whole may repent after being beaten by the March 8 tsunami. But unfortunately, it looks like Umno have, instead, become more narrow-minded and racial in approach by harping on Ketuanan Melayu or Malay dominance, with open disregard for the feelings of others.

Anwar Ibrahim was then attacked by Umno as a tool of the non-Malays. That does not help to foster national unity, apart from being a blatant lie. On the other hand, MCA accused

Anwar Ibrahim as being a double-faced man, allegedly for saying one thing to the Malays, and another thing to the non-Malays.

One thing for sure, Anwar Ibrahim pleaded for a new Malaysian Economic agenda on the basis of Ketuanan Rakyat wherever he is.

Whereas Ong Tee Kiat, the prospective candidate for MCA's president post, advocated for a Malaysian line but was immediately shot down by MCA conservatives as being impractical and contrary to the spirit of its (MCA's) founding.

Many think that Umno may do its damage-control, but it should not be done at the expense of racial harmony and national unity.

For that, members of all the components of BN (that also includes Umno) have to really search for their souls this time.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/88616>