

Now M'sians have reason to celebrate
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On Aug 26, five days before 51th Merdeka, voters in Permatang Pauh went to vote for what they want - of a better Malaysia for themselves and their children.
MCPX

The outcome: they voted for the opposition candidate not by a small majority as predicted by many observers but by a resounding majority that shatters once and for all the many stereotypes held of the Malaysian electorate as fearful, docile, easy to manipulate, and captive to the racial fears stoked up by an opportunistic, cynical and increasingly out of touch and desperate Barisan Nasional coalition.

malaysia merdeka 50th anniversary 280807 youthsAll Malaysians should salute the Malay voters especially as they were subject to intense pressure to vote for the Barisan candidate so as to safeguard "the future of the Malay race" and "Malay supremacy".

Rejecting one of the most blatantly racist election campaigns run by the BN one example was a widely disseminated flyer of a "babi (or pig) cabinet" coming into power should the PKR candidate win; turning a deaf ear to the smear and fear campaign waged against Anwar Ibrahim, his PKR colleagues and the Pakatan Rakyat parties; ignoring the mainstream mass media which again showed its true colours by largely churning out a torrent of propaganda extolling the present government and running down the opposition candidate, the great majority of this semi-rural constituency voted for a leader and for the Pakatan Rakyat coalition and their hope that through their vote, decency, good governance and good sense will be restored to our body politics and to the other major institutions subject to abusive and repressive BN control and influence.

All those who voted for the opposition party in Permatang Pauh may not be fully aware of the momentous ripple effects of their decision in the voting booth.

The elections result is likely to intensify the infighting within the top Umno leadership with each faction blaming the other for the devastating scale of defeat. It could also widen the growing rift between Umno and the non-Malay BN coalition parties – the latter will surely be concerned at how the Permatang Pauh campaign was so much focused on the restoration of "Ketuanan Melayu ala Umno" and the Malay agenda.

Other ripple effects are an even larger question mark over BN's grip on power in the country with the possibility of a snowballing loss of confidence in Umno's ability to reform itself leading to a possible mass exodus of BN parliamentarians to the Pakatan side.

Fatal dent to Najib's hopes

Finally, the decisive margin of victory achieved by Anwar - despite a considerable investment of time and personal attention put into the campaign by the Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak to destroy Anwar's political career – may put a fatal dent to Najib's hopes of succeeding to the prime ministership position when Abdullah Ahmad Badawi steps down.

permatang pauh by election results map 260808The key issues pushed by the BN election machinery did not touch only on race and economy but they also focused on that of character – principally through the sodomy allegation against Anwar.

If Permatang Pauh is a gauge of the concerns of the larger Malay population on the character issue, it would appear that there are considerably more concerns with the moral deficiencies and lapses on the government side that those attributed to opposition figures and parties.

Whatever the larger macro political ripple effects arising from this by election results, Permatang Pauh voters should not be punished for exercising their democratic right to vote.

Continued neglect of the socio-economic and livelihood that beset many in the constituency; deliberate delay of development projects or malicious singling out of localities, kampungs, voters and their families for discriminatory action to penalise politically incorrect behaviour will not only be counterproductive but it will also reinforce the perception of many voters in Permatang Pauh and the rest of the country that the BN is beyond reform.

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