

Now up to PKR leader to walk the talk
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Anwar Ibrahim's victory is a great psychological boost to the Pakatan Rakyat. It is also supposed to herald a new beginning for Malaysia. What exactly does that entail?
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Before that, let's examine some of the issues raised during campaigning, described by many bloggers and some denizens of the mainstream media to be one of the 'most dirty' in Malaysian history. It must be remembered that this is a Malay majority seat. 70% Malay and 30% non-Malay more or less.

The victory of Anwar Ibrahim shows that such demographical division is only just that. The majority voted for Anwar and the new politics he represents. The BN reached for the oldest trick in the hat - a Chinese-educated Malay candidate. They hoped to win over the non-Malays. Instead, some BN stalwarts moved across the floor instead. The reason is why did that happen.

The deputy prime minister launched the campaign by asking the non-Malays to return to the BN. In his next breath, he accused Anwar Ibrahim of selling-out the Malays. As the days went by, the campaign became more racial. UiTM was brought into the fracas. Malays were told that a PKR victory would mean a loss of their 'privileges'.

Such dire warnings remain nothing but warnings. Dr Mahathir Mohammad himself said in his most recent blog article that affirmative action is not something to be proud of and that it is certainly not to be considered a privilege. The former premier has his hand on the pulse. No recipient of affirmative action feels proud. Those who wear it as a badge of honour usually have other types of medals pinned on their chests.

Then there was the sodomy accusation. If there was any point to the sodomy accusation which formed the bedrock of the BN campaign was that those who never learn from their mistakes are doomed to repeat them. What was achieved was the ire of the people. The on-sidedness of it all drove many former BN supporters across the threshold. Some of them even endorsed Anwar Ibrahim or more accurately the values he now represents.

If we can believe Anwar Ibrahim, he is now going to parliament as the opposition leader. He must play this role well. Government policy needs professional scrutiny if we are to do well in the future. Anwar also promises to bring an end to the BN government come Sept 16. This is speeding up things rather rapidly. It remains to be seen if this is just rhetoric.

So, before he rushes ahead, Anwar must remember that he promised to create an equitable society. Mahathir's latest blog on 'Affirmative action' is an excellent exposition on the difficulties of bringing that vision to fruition. For whatever its worth, Mahathir tried and did not succeed.

If we can all agree on one issue is that the weak need to be given a fair chance to succeed. What many Malaysians cannot agree is the method employed. As Mahathir rightly points out, affirmative action is discrimination and no matter how you explain it, those discriminated against will feel cheated.

The challenge now is how to identify those who really need help and those who can make it on their own. Most Malaysians want to make it on their own. Anwar's victory, his rise from the ashes, demonstrates that perhaps it is time we free an entire ethnic group from the 'shame' attached to affirmative action. For, if one is truly in need of help, being assisted should not be something shameful.

If, as Mahathir argues, the BN government and their affirmative action policy has brought Malaysia to this level of development, can we be sure that we have not reached the limits that the system can provide? The implementation, he openly admits, is not functioning well. Too many are now entrenched in corruption owing to the structure and system of the NEP.

Can Anwar Ibrahim's victory in a Malay majority constituency be interpreted as a open show of support for a non-sectarian Malaysia? I think such an interpretation would be to see things through rose-tinted glasses.

But it shows that a candidate promoting a non-sectarian agenda can win in a Malay majority area. It demonstrates that we may be ready for a gradual change of mindset. For the change must not alienate or put fear in those who have gingerly opened their minds to a new way of doing things.

It is now up to the PKR leader to walk the talk. To demonstrate to Malaysia how an alternative policy will help bring Malaysia to the next level. The BN has reduced poverty to '5%', Pakatan Rakyat's formula must finish the job.

It is time Anwar Ibrahim get on with the job as His Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

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