

Umno's gamble fails spectacularly
Malaysiakini.com
Aug 28, 2008
Joe Fernandez

Malaysian voters, the rural Malays included this time, have finally come of age. They chose Permatang Pauh to finally end 50 years of a race-based political nightmare.
MCPX

Surely, Permatang Pauh is the clearest indication too that living on hope and indulging in wishful thinking can never be substitutes for honesty, truth, service and hard work.

The shenanigans in Umno tried to seize the moral high ground - unmindful of their own proverbial skeletons - and the gamble failed spectacularly. "Seperti ketam mengajar anaknya berjalan lurus (like a crab teaching its young to walk straight)," noted an old villager in Permatang Pauh.

saiful bukhari azlan and anwar ibrahim 150808 2The ex-coffee boy Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan was all over Permatang Pauh with Umno. Until then, he had been in hiding, playing hide-and-seek with the media and taking some potshots through his new blog. Swearing on religious holy books in the face of divine retribution - sumpah laknat - is no substitute for the courts.

Umno erroneously saw the situation as a gift from the political gods when they decided to make the most of it. His oath has been dismissed on the eve of polling by the very imam who was directed by interested parties to bear witness to the event.

"The imam won his place in history with his honesty but will he disappear as well, after this, as others with the inconvenient truth have done?" some bloggers have commented.

At this point, Saiful's first examining doctor is still missing. Also missing in action is private eye P Balasubramaniam and his family, and his nephew fears the worst. The family apparently fled after he made some revelations of the going-ons in the corridors-of-power at a press conference hosted by Anwar Ibrahim.

"In civilised societies," points out a retired lawyer, "this would be tantamount to destroying material evidence and tampering with witnesses."

Umno's one deviation from a sodomy campaign was a modest decrease in fuel prices, thereby adding insult - the smallness being a sore issue - to injury (to the steep increase in July). Traders ganged up and refused to budge and thereby nullified any benefits the people could have otherwise obtained from the decrease.

'Pawning Malay dignity'

It was a desperate gamble at the 11th hour after indicating that any reduction would be on Sept 1. Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak angrily lashed out at the complaints as the work of ingrates and pledged not to lower fuel oil prices in future if they are "not appreciated" by the people.

uitm students protest in selangor state office 130808 02Umno also went to town with the

UiTM issue and accused Anwar of "pawning Malay dignity in order to achieve his personal ambition of being prime minister". 'Malay dignity' appears to hinge on denying a 10 percent entry of non-Malays to a university that allows foreign students.

This was on top of accusing him of being an American spy "willing to destroy the country in order to become prime minister in the process".

It was history in the making: Tues 26 Aug 2008, 9.50pm. Final official Elections Commission tally - Anwar got 31,195 votes; Arif Shah, 15,524; Hanafi, 92.

Anwar's majority of 15,671 was even bigger than the votes obtained by his nearest challenger Arif Shah Omar Shah who also had the dubious distinction of bringing in fewer votes this time for his party.

Anwar's wife and PKR president, Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, won the seat with a 13,388 majority at the general elections. But PKR had set out to outdo that performance, and they have.

Umno president and Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi gave first indications of defeat when he hurriedly left Permatang Pauh shortly after 4pm. Abdullah, the Barisan Nasional chief, evaded the press - who spotted him making a quick getaway.

The low voter turnout among Indians and Chinese, taken aback by a campaign of intimidation and the negative stance by BN component parties, robbed Pakatan Rakyat of a more resounding victory.

Finally, it was left to the Malay voters to sort out the issue: reformasi (reformation) through Pakatan's "Forgive, Not Forget" pledges. They spoke in a decisive voice that the politics of divide-and-rule, pitting Malaysians against each other, are indeed finally over.

The writing is on the wall for Umno, in particular its days are numbered and it is anyone's guess whether the BN component parties will swim or sink with Umno.

Opposition leader

Anwar is likely to step into his wife's former role as opposition leader and can be expected to name a shadow cabinet. There is a promise of five deputy prime ministers from the Indian, Chinese, Malay, Dayak and Kadazandusun communities.

anwar ibrahim seberang jaya market permatang pauh by election visit 180808 05Future prime ministers, after Anwar, will be selected from among themselves by the five deputy prime ministers by secret ballot, we are told. No Malaysian will be denied a shot at the prime minister's post on the grounds of race, religion or gender.

Anwar has pledged to seize the reins of the federal government by Sept 16 - Malaysia Day. Should Anwar have the numbers as promised, the end could come sooner than expected for the ruling Umno/BN government.

In the absence of a no-confidence motion - a stillborn idea the last time after the House speaker turned against it to protect his position - a majority of the MPs can petition his majesty, the King, with their signatures and sworn affidavits to allow in his infinite wisdom a peaceful change of government.

That would be nothing short of a peaceful revolution of sorts, long in the making.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/88721>