

Peoples' Merdeka message loud and clear
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On March 8, the people of all races sent a strong message to the Barisan Nasional (BN) government that they need change in the form of drastic reforms in the administration of the nation.
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The government promised to bring those reforms but the pace was too slow for their liking. Unfortunately, instead of concentrating fully on those reforms and working together with the stronger opposition to realise those reforms, the government was more focused on politics to dismantle the newly formed opposition coalition, Pakatan Rakyat.

Five months later the rakyat, in no uncertain terms, have again cried out for those reforms that are badly needed, especially at a time of economic uncertainties that have put tremendous strains on their budgets. This plea has come in the form of the just concluded Permatang Pauh by-election.

The voters on behalf of the 27 million Malaysians have once again voted for change. The resounding victory they gave Anwar Ibrahim is an indicator that the people are serious in their demands for change. Anwar himself described his landslide victory as a 'defining moment that should serve as a major lesson for the ruling BN'.

The people did not vote for Anwar because of his looks or his charisma. They did not vote for him for his oratory skills or because of his position as a former deputy prime minister. The people are too smart now to succumb to such trivial issues unlike in the past.

They voted for Anwar for the message of change he promised - a fairer economic policy for all Malaysians regardless of ethnicity, combating escalating inflation, fighting corruption, restoring integrity to the judiciary and police, respecting human rights and giving more freedom of expression for the people. In short, he promised good governance and an administration that would place the interests of the people above all others, the so-called 'Ketuanan Rakyat'.

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak was gracious enough to promptly accept defeat and congratulate Anwar on his success. Najib's magnanimous actions are most commendable as it augurs well for our democratic system but that alone is not enough to win the hearts of the people.

Much more needs to be done to convince the people that the BN is serious in bringing about the changes demanded by them. It is time for BN to change its style of operation to show that it is listening to the people. It cannot win by just highlighting the negative points of the opponent but by emphasising on its own positive attributes.

The BN should not try to undermine Anwar's legitimate victory in Permatang Pauh as it would only mean showing disrespect for the people. Instead, it should be magnanimous to accept him and work together with him as the Opposition Leader for the well-being of all the people. I am sure Anwar with his vast experience and wisdom has much to contribute to the nation.

We have come a long way in developing our country to what it is today, but after 51 years of self-rule, the most glaring problem is that we have racial and religious polarisation of our once united multiracial population.

The vast majority of Malaysians share a common dream, a dream that one day Malaysia becomes a developed nation with the wholehearted contribution of all races, a day when all communities are accepted as equal and every citizen feels equally proud to be called Malaysian.

Our leaders have given their 'Merdeka' message to the people. But on this 51st anniversary of our independence; the people instead have, in their own way, given their 'Merdeka' message to the leaders.

It is loud and clear: 'Bring change quickly or we will make the change'.

Let us all in our own little ways act to fulfill the will of the rakyat by working towards the evolution of a successful, peaceful, harmonious and multiracial Malaysia, where Ketuanan Rakyat will always reign supreme.

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