

The Anwar 'prophecies' dissected
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Joe Fernandez

They are still at it everywhere, at the teh tarik stalls, the warongs and kopi tiams, reliving the magic moments of Aug 26 in Permatang Pauh much like in the days when Tambunan in Sabah burst into the national headlines in 1984 and precipitated the fall of the Berjaya government.

Anwar permatang pauh thanksgiving dinner310808 supporters.jpgNow, the wheels of fortune have turned once more and the worst nightmare of Umno has come true for the brigade of furious nail-biters in the party despite the sodomy II charges, "security" roadblocks on polling day and bizarre attempts to bus in phantom voters and an extended period of vote-counting.

The sons of the opposition MP, Gobalakrishnan, who spotted a phantom busload were even beaten up in public by the overzealous police on duty for their father's act of public spiritedness.

Now, there are more than a few moments of disquiet these days in the corridors of power over a possibility that the powers-that-be had earlier dismissed as an elaborate opposition spin, even as they went into panic mode and kept pushing buttons at random.

Now, the tables have been turned, and it seems that it's the spin of the government party machinery which seems to be spiraling out of control at the expense of the economy: savings and investments are down; jobs are slow; and prices, except that for the shares, keep moving north. There's much to be said for the honest truth, decency, common sense and the realm of the possible in the art of political communication.

anwar thanks voters at permatang pasir 300808.jpgPKR advisor Anwar Ibrahim had 'prophesised' - predict being too mild a term - that he would take his seat in parliament as the opposition leader, opposite the prime minister and look into his eyes.

His 'prophecy' has now come true in the aftermath of Aug 26 when he took the Permatang Pauh seat which his wife, party chief Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, had kept safe for him through the 10 long years when he was a lonely voice in the political wilderness.

What now? Will Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi blink, hang his head in shame or avert his gaze and squirm in his chair. This must be the most uncomfortable seat in the august house for now. From the opposition leader's seat to the prime minister's chair, it's just a short hop, skip and jump away when the games of musical chairs begin.

Up to the MPs now

Members of parliament, the whispers along the grapevine goes, can now decide who they want as prime minister: Abdullah, who lost his home state, or Anwar who ironically is from the same place.

lembah pantai nomination day 240208 hugsThere's already a father-and-daughter team here since eldest daughter Nurul Izzah, Puteri Reformasi, is in parliament as the member for

Lembah Pantai.

She easily wrested the Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory seat on Sat 8 March from Umno Wanita deputy Shahrizat Jalil who has been given a new lease of life as special advisor to the PM on Muslim Women's Affairs despite an existing ministry for women.

True, the sodomy II charges – conspiracy is another term used - hang like the proverbial sword of Damocles over Anwar's head.

All this will be academic if and when the opposition alliance, Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact), seizes the reins of power in Putrajaya by Sept 16, Malaysia Day, as predicted – prophecy being too strong a term for now - on the reformasi (reformation) theme of 'Forgive, Not Forget'.

Critics see a contradiction in terms here and foresee an accounting of scores under a Pakatan-led federal government. Anwar has pledged that there won't be any acts of revenge – "although there must be a proper accounting", he said - but has admitted it was getting increasingly difficult to draw a line between "a proper accounting" and "an accounting of scores", "since the government continued to pursue him with a vengeance".

musa hassan Ironically, it was not so long ago that IGP Musa Hassan, oblivious to the difficulties that it caused the man in the street, had parliament cordoned off for a five kilometer area to prevent Anwar from making an appearance. This was after obtaining an unprecedented court order, to arrest him if he appears within the five kilometer limit, amidst swirling rumours that police were hunting him down like a common criminal over allegations of sodomy.

Anwar's house in Bukit Segambut is within the five kilometer limit and this fact alone must raise serious questions on the professionalism and competence of the police – "among the best in the world, if not the best", according to Musa Hassan - and cast severe doubts on the ability of the judiciary to properly scrutinise any application placed before them.

It is hard to dismiss that Aug 26 was poetical justice and the run-up may have had something to do with the IGP going into emergency surgery with a heart condition. Had his maker been kinder, he would have been spared the embarrassment and sheer humiliation that is sure to follow in the days, weeks and months ahead.

There was the case of one of his recent predecessors who did a spell in jail for beating up Anwar and giving him the infamous blue-and-black eye – Mahathir then explained that Anwar had punched himself to get public sympathy - which has now become the PKR logo.

If Aug 26 sealed the fate of the Umno-led Barisan Nasional government, after the electoral triumphs of March 8 - when Pakatan took 82 seats in the Dewan Rakyat, four states, one Federal Territory, and retained Kelantan - how will the finishing touches come for Sept 16?

What next?

What other prophecies are in store for the people?

Is Anwar Ibrahim entering parliament as the opposition leader on Thursday, Aug 28, the first step towards the Sept 16 'Revolution', the third political tsunami, that he has been pledging ever since the opposition alliance unleashed the first on Saturday, Mar 8.

muhyiddin yasin muhyiddin yassin Many Umno leaders, rattled by Aug 26, are casting nervous glances over their shoulders while others continue to pooh-pooh the idea that an even bigger calamity is in store for them down the road in the not too distant future. Both Umno vice-president Muhyiddin and Kelantan political warlord Tengku Razaleigh are among the former.

There is a distinct divide in the corridors-of-power between those who don't dismiss the possibility of Sept 16 outright and those who, critics say, continue to be in "a state of denial".

The prime minister, not surprisingly, doesn't see Permatang Pauh as indicating a trend nationwide. This is the same man who discounted "the Anwar factor" on the eve of the March 8 polls, adding he had forgotten all about Anwar. He spoke too soon. In hindsight, had Anwar qualified to run for public office on Mar 8, Umno and BN would have been consigned to the dustbins of history sooner rather than later.

anwar pak lah najib crash style Abdullah's deputy Najib, plagued by continuing controversy, swears that Umno's two-year transition of power plan is on track and vowed to take office in mid-2010. Is he speaking too soon as well?

Cynics note that there appears to be a lack of warmth in the relationship between the two men and add that anything can happen in two years. "Even a week is a long time in politics," point out the cynics, echoing a longtime truism on politics.. There is a theory making the rounds that both men, in fact, don't really trust each other at all and work behind the scenes to undermine each other.

"It's their common fear of Anwar that holds them both back from going for each other's throats," says a former branch secretary of the Umno Bukit Bintang before it was declared unlawful by Justice Harun Hashim in the late 80s.

"Najib sees Abdullah as an usurper. Abdullah sees no reason why he must have Najib as his deputy or even less reasons why he must hand over power to that man of all people."

Seven reasons why

In general, seven factors are driving the Sept 16 phenomenon: the Indian community; the Chinese; Malaysian Borneo; the Malay grassroots; BN component parties; the arrival of political ideology; and the desire among ordinary Malaysians to see real political and other changes in Malaysia:

- * hindraf penang protest 230808 thanenthiran The Indian community's almost total withdrawal of support for Umno. The community is the deciding factor in 67 of the parliamentary seats in Peninsular Malaysia. The community has belatedly realized that they have been squatted on by the system and the government over the last 50 years.

- * The Indian "desertion" has had spillover effects on the Chinese community. The Chinese have traditionally looked to Indian leadership in trade unionism, NGOs and the law.

- * Malaysian Borneo sees March 8 as presenting them with a historical "window of

opportunity" to correct longheld grievances and win a more equitable share of the federal government.

* Increasing disenchantment among the Malay grassroots over the Umnoputra syndrome i.e. few among the elite and their hangers-on and fat cats living it up at their expense.

* Rapidly dwindling enthusiasm among BN component parties for the Umno leadership.

* The irrelevance of the race-based politics of the BN vs Hindraf's (Hindu Rights Action Front) emphasis on equal rights, makkal sakthi (people power) phenomenon; PKR's ketuanan rakyat (supremacy of the people).

* The call by the Islamists of PAS for the race factor, forbidden by Islam, to be kept out of politics; and DAP's (Democratic Action Party) call for a Malaysian Malaysia.

The desire among Malaysians everywhere for a reformation of national institutions which have been eroded and compromised over the last 50 years and especially in the last two decades.

bidayuh protest tree planting project in serian 170407 groupIn Singghei, 30 minutes by road from Kuching, a weather-beaten old Bidayuh villager sums up: "We no longer want the BN. We want a change. That's why we support Anwar Ibrahim. He's standing up against all these big people who have been in power for so long. We have been taken for granted all these years. We need to think of what we are going to leave behind for the future generations."

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