

Sept 16: Is Anwar a failure?

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Yesterday, I received a number of text messages and anxious calls from friends and colleagues. Most of them asked the same question, "Did Anwar do it?" The answer is still hazy and unclear. But what is for sure yesterday was clearly not his day.

Anwar Ibrahim, in a press conference, claimed that he has the numbers to form the next government but would like to meet up with Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to plan for a peaceful transition.

Fair enough, I believe, since defections are unavoidable, it is his responsibility to ensure there is a smooth transition of power.

But Abdullah has rejected the idea of meeting up with Anwar to discuss transition of power. Instead, the premier also challenged Anwar to reveal the names of the alleged Barisan Nasional defectors.

Abdullah has missed a golden opportunity to catch Anwar telling a big fat lie. He should have agreed to meet up with Anwar and then expose his intention to negotiate power sharing with him.

By turning down Anwar's request to meet up with him, Abdullah is again conceding more psychological ground to his opponent. Both are prominent leaders and I am sure none of them is willing to stake it all in this high risk mind game.

I would like to urge Abdullah to accept Anwar's request to meet up and kill the rumour of defections once and for all. By doing so, he is helping our political situation to calm down and allow the current government to function properly.

Since Anwar has missed his Sept 16 deadline, I am sure many of you would not be holding back to call him a failure. However, the reactions from the government over the last few days proved otherwise.

I am not sure if Anwar is a total failure. He has definitely employed the right political strategy to get what he wanted for his party.

First, Umno is surely cracking up and factions are emerging within the party making internal threats more dangerous to Abdullah than external ones.

Dr M is making a comeback which is seen as a desperate last minute move to dethrone Abdullah and block Anwar from taking over federal government. According to Ahirudin Attan of Rocky's bru, both Dr M and Ku Li have teamed up to form the 'Dream Team'.

Funny, as USA's basketball dream team was defeated in the 2004 Olympics. So, not all dream teams are equally potent. Frictions have started to emerge and some voices have called for the mid-2010 leadership transition plan to be reconsidered by the delegates. Others are not happy that the transition was decided by merely two persons.

Second, the government was obviously pushed to the limit and was forced to use the ISA on

3 political detainees - the last straw which broke Zaid Ibrahim's back.

The highly regarded de facto law minister Zaid resigned on Monday and his move was a major blow to Abdullah's reforms agenda. Both Abdullah and Zaid were not consulted on the use of ISA. Logically, a law minister should have been consulted on the use of right legislation on the three detainees.

Many who know Teresa Kok, Tan Cheng Hoon and Raja Petra Kammarudin would laugh at the idea that they are national threats. Teresa and Tan are docile looking women who are anything but a national threat. RPK may occasional bark louder than he bites but has never been involved in any plot to harm the nation.

Third, the sending of 50 BN backbenchers to Taiwan for a field trip has made the BN government a laughing stock. Why only Taiwan if the intention was a study trip?

News reports of BN MPs making abrupt hotel transfers at midnight and wee hours of the morning made the Taiwanese proud that we finally adopted their political tactics.

The fear of Sept 16 materialising is freaking out the ruling party. The more they react, the more mistakes they will commit. This is precisely Anwar's game plan.

The outcome is a loss of confidence by the Malaysian public in their government. Such an outcome is going to push away even more MPs from the BN to make a leap of faith knowing that their political career may not last beyond the next general election.

The emphasis given to Sept 16 is symbolic and yet potent to attract and fire up the imagination of many people especially East Malaysians.

By making the Sept 16 his rally point and a deadline for change, Anwar wants Malaysians to make a psychological leap and break all current socio-political boundaries erected by the present regime.

This date marks the birth of the nation - Malaysia. Anwar's New Malaysian Agenda talks about a new framework for nation building, including the abolishment of draconian laws, the New Economic Policy, the promotion of a truly multiracial coalition and others.

BN's reluctance to accept fully the significance of Sept 16 has irked many parties especially Sabahans and Sarawakians who are seeking fairer treatment and a full reinstatement of the 20-point agreement made between them and Malaya.

This renewed awareness has ignited new dynamics, possibilities and energy for Malaysians to push for true nation building, national identity and a just and equitable society. This awareness cannot be simply erased despite the fact that there was no change of government on Sept 16.

If you still think that Anwar is a failure, I suggest that you think harder. Since the March 8 general election, Anwar has merely helped to enhance our awareness on the significance of Sept 16 and what this date holds for all of us. He has succeeded in his objective.

Through this awareness, we are collectively responsible to ensure that this momentum for change is sustained. This movement for change is going to make this nation a better one.

This date will strengthen our resolve to fight racism, corruption, power abuse and unfairness

in our society.

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