

**Anwar hails new birth of nationalism**  
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**Terence Netto**

PKR leader and putative Pakatan Rakyat chief Anwar Ibrahim today hailed the political tsunami that occurred a year ago as a "new birth of nationalism".

In an address to mark the first anniversary of the event delivered to a packed gathering of 1,000 in the Shah Alam Municipal Council hall, Anwar exhorted the opposition coalition to invite Malaysians to be part of this movement.

"Call the people to be a part of this new birth of nationalism, to build this nation upon the principles of justice, fair play and opportunities for all," trumpeted the man whose travails in 1998 sparked the reformasi movement that 10 years later allowed the opposition to deny a two-thirds majority in Parliament of a hitherto invincible Barisan Nasional.

Anwar, citing Victor Hugo's dictum that "Greater than the tread of mighty armies is an idea whose time has come," ascribed historical inevitability to the nationalist tide he said Pakatan Rakyat was riding.

"March 8th restored hope to many who had given up on our government. Throughout the country I meet Malaysians inspired by that day. They can envision a future that is more prosperous and a nation more united," he said to cheering supporters, including major leaders and representatives of PKR and its coalition partners, DAP and PAS.

Anwar also consigned to oblivion the memory of his failed bid last September 16 to form the federal government by pointing to the next general elections.

"If you voted for us in 2008 you were a part of history. Know that in the next election, your vote will determine the future course of this nation. Don't let that opportunity pass. I ask of all Malaysians who share in this dream to be part of the movement for change."

**They cannot walk the talk**

Anwar poured scorn on the BN government's talk of understanding why the people had spurned them in several of their former bastions.

"The Umno-dominated BN is caught in a warp of its own making. They talk of reform but cannot walk the talk. This is what a half century in power does to you."

He also dismissed as sham the government's recently introduced measures to combat corruption and restore the judiciary to independence and impartiality.

"After much anticipation and hype we have a new commission to fight corruption. But it has already proven its true colours.

"The MACC (Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission) is no different from its predecessor, pursuing frivolous attacks against the Pakatan Rakyat whilst ignoring the endless supply of abhorrent taking place in the BN government's own backyard."

As for the judiciary, Anwar said that "a superficial attempt (the creation of the Judicial Appointments Commission) to restore credibility to the process of appointing judges has fallen flat."

"The courts remain cluttered with judges whose records speak volumes as to their lack of impartiality and pervasive influence peddling," he asserted.

### **Gap between rich and poor widens**

Turning to economics, Anwar said that Malaysia was abundantly endowed with natural resources but "the rich grow wealthier while the gap widens between them and the vast majority of Malaysians."

"The poor, the majority of whom are still the Malays and bumiputeras of Sabah and Sarawak and the Indians in the estates, are scarcely better off today than they were 10 years ago. Behind the façade of a first world country, we reflect the tendencies of Third World development," said Anwar caustically.

He accused the government of being slow to react to the global credit crisis that threatened a worldwide recession but he said it was still not too late to address the challenges.

He held that any stimulus package must be subjected to an impartial regimen of oversight and public disclosure.

"We have every reason to believe that unless monitored carefully the money will once again end up in the wrong hands and the country and the people will suffer the consequences," he warned.

Anwar contrasted the pall that surrounds the BN with the year just completed of what he claimed was good governance in the five Pakatan held states.

"Contracts are awarded more efficiently and with open tenders. Zero tolerance of corruption has saved us hundreds of millions already, while giving small businesses and entrepreneurs the confidence to invest and create jobs knowing that the system works for them," he said.

Anwar then reeled out a slew of figures and statistics that purported to show the state governments of Penang and Selangor have done better in the past year in terms of investments and jobs growth than in the immediately preceding years.

He said the two states' initiatives in helping the poor and needy in the basic necessities like water and health provision were ground breaking. He said in education, Selangor had introduced a scheme that would see poor students obtain financial help for tertiary studies.

He praised the "visionary leadership" of Perak's Nizar Jamaluddin in land matters where he said great large swathes of land were given to religious schools and national-type Chinese schools.

### **Hope for a better tomorrow**

Reaching for a broader canvass on which to foist the Pakatan vision for a better tomorrow, Anwar acknowledged that this hope of a new Malaysia was hard to envision for "our brother

and sisters in Sabah and Sarawak” because of the betrayal they have long suffered.

But he urged them to give Pakatan a chance. “This coalition has proven it has much to offer and that together we can build a better Malaysia.”

Pulling all the strands he had threaded through his 15-page address, Anwar told the crowd that road ahead would be “long and winding and fraught with the greatest of hazards and impediments.”

“We will be waylaid and abducted from our journey but yet we shall not be strayed.”

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