

DATE: 5 / 3 / 2008

# Anwar's burden not nation's to bear

NST- 5/3/2008

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YOU know what they say about politics, right? That it is the art of the possible; that there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies...

Therefore, it was not really surprising to see academic and reformist Prof Dr Chandra Muzaffar, a once staunch political ally of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, breaking his silence with a castigating indictment of the man who was once his friend.

For seven years after he left the then Parti Keadilan Nasional of which he was deputy president to Anwar's wife, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Chandra maintained silence, probably not wanting to be dragged into the murky world of political mudslinging.

He kept quiet in the 2004 general election, perhaps because Anwar was still in prison.

But on Monday, saying that he did not want Malaysians, especially non-Malays, to be deceived any more, he made this damning statement: "If Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim becomes the prime minister, it will be an unmitigated disaster for Malaysia."

Chandra is not a politician. He is an academician, a scholar, a thinker — not a street-wise political brawler.

When he threw in his lot with Anwar Ibrahim and became deputy president of Keadilan, many of those who knew him were, in a way, a little disappointed; those who cared for him felt that by going into politics, he was compromising his objectivity.

But in 1998, Malaysia was in the eye of the storm caused by the Asian financial crisis; the sacking of Anwar, then deputy prime minister, and his black eye caused by a beating in jail raised the ire of many Malaysians. Emotions ran high and many heads were



ruled by their hearts.

There were many others who were also shocked and infuriated by Anwar's beating but they put the blame where it belonged and did not condemn an entire administration for the actions of one hot-headed and irrational individual.

Those who want to judge Chandra, or the many other professionals and intellectuals whose immediate reaction was to join the so-called *reformasi* movement, should take heed of the situation and events of that period.

Those were different times and the many who reacted in anger have since gone separate ways, people like Anwar's lawyer, Zainur Zakaria, or his close friend, S. Nallakuruppan, or his political secretary and ex-Keadilan Youth head, Ezam Mohd Nor, or the loyal lieutenant, Chandra Muzaffar.

But Chandra's first public reproach of Anwar is perhaps a timely reminder that historical perspective is important, especially in Malaysia where people seem to forget easily.

Anwar, since his release from prison, has proclaimed himself as de facto leader of PKR and has actively campaigned for the loose opposition alliance which includes the theocratic Pas and the Chinese-based Democratic Action Party, the two oldest opposition parties in the country.

Before that, for 17 years, Anwar was in the highest ranks of Umno and the

Barisan Nasional, and for 17 years, he asked Malaysians to give him their trust and believe in him. Many did.

Today, Anwar is again asking Malaysians to place their trust in him and the DAP and Pas.

But what did he say then? Perhaps the 1995 general election, the last one in which Anwar led the BN campaign, may be worth revisiting.

Almost 13 years ago, on April 21, 1995, while campaigning in Banting, Selangor, then deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had this to say: "The DAP, Pas and Parti Melayu Semangat 46 leaders are so power crazy that they are willing to manipulate the people for their political ends. Such leaders who could easily lie are only interested in power and have no regard for the well-being of the society and the country."

On the pledges by the DAP, Pas and the now defunct Semangat 46 to abolish taxes, Anwar, who was also finance minister, said on April 23, 1995: "If we abolish taxes, where are we going to get funds to carry out development projects like building schools and mosques? They can make promises but we have to ask ourselves whether they have the capacity to fulfil their promises."

Today, Anwar says the opposition pact will reduce the price of oil, which is heavily subsidised by the government, if they come to power.

On the Barisan Nasional, Anwar said on April 13, 1995: "People should use the government's remarkable track record as a yardstick to measure the efficiency of the BN in administering the nation."

"Unlike the opposition, which is fond of making empty pledges and promises, the country, under the BN, is respected worldwide. We should not become ungrateful citizens like the opposition."

On the 1995 opposition



Anwar said in 1995 that BN was respected worldwide



Anwar said Pas leaders like Hadi (above) had betrayed the Malays



Kit Siang was warned by Anwar against playing with fire

manifesto, Anwar said: "The opposition manifestos contain promises that cannot be fulfilled."

This time, the opposition manifestos promise goodies for Malaysians. The DAP wants to give RM6,000 to each family; Pas and PKR want to lower the price of oil and give money to single mothers, newlyweds, young aspiring businessmen and many others.

On Pas, now his strongest ally, and which was then led by Datuk Seri Hadi Awang, Anwar had this to say: "The people should reject Pas for it has failed to promote the welfare of Muslims in the country. The insincerity of Pas' struggle is evident from its co-operation with the DAP to deny the Malays their rights for a brighter future."

"Pas leaders claimed that they are fighting to uphold Islam and the integrity of the Malays in front of their supporters in Terengganu or Kelantan because these are Malay-majority states, but in Penang, they were willing to work with the DAP to betray the Malays."

Today, Pas is still propagating the same theme in the "green belt" states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Tereng-

ganu and is working together with Anwar's PKR and the DAP in Penang. Hadi Awang is still president of Pas.

What were his views on the DAP and Pas in general?

Anwar had this message for voters in 1995: "The opposition parties are harping on racial sentiments to disrupt harmony. Pas and Semangat 46 are churning racial sentiments among the Malays while their ally, the DAP, in wooing Chinese votes, is attempting to create hatred against the government and the Malays."

"We should not allow ourselves to be made tools of the opposition parties."

And what about his current ally, the DAP's Lim Kit Siang?

"We will not tolerate the DAP, which harps on racial sentiments. I am warning Kit Siang not to play with fire because the Malays are not stupid and their patience has its limit."

"Unlike them (the then opposition alliance) the Barisan Nasional is consistent with its stand in helping all Malaysians."

What did he think about the opposition DAP-Pas-Semangat 46 pact?

"It's a threesome *khalwat*; a marriage of convenience. The

parties do not have common objectives and each follows its own agenda."

Today, the difference is that Semangat 46 has been replaced by Anwar's PKR. The DAP and Pas are led by the same people who led them in 1995.

And did not the current BN chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi say a week or so ago that the DAP-PKR-Pas pact was a coalition of convenience because the three parties each had different dreams and ideologies?

In his 17 years in power, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim stood for many things. Today, he has taken a different stance.

The BN, despite all its flaws, is still consistent.

So, do we throw out the baby with the bath water because Anwar Ibrahim now tells us that he was wrong all through those 17 years?

And why should a whole country bear the collective guilt for one black eye inflicted by one policeman who has already paid the price for his actions?

I sympathise with what happened to Anwar but I will not carry that burden of guilt. Neither should the country.