

'Disaster if Anwar is PM'

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Chandra: He's not the kind of leader the country needs



The panel: (From left) Karim, Prof Syed Arabi, Dr Jayasooria, Wong, Dr Chandra and Sim discussing issues related to the general election at the forum at Menara Star in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

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PETALING JAYA: If Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim becomes Prime Minister, it will be an "unmitigated disaster" for Malaysia, a former Parti Keadilan Nasional (before they joined forces with Parti Rakyat Malaysia to become PKR) deputy-president said at a forum yesterday.

Dr Chandra Muzaffar said that while the former deputy prime minister was a good speaker, he was not the sort of leader the country needed as he was now singing a different tune from when he was in the Government.

Dr Chandra, who was the party's deputy-president for two-and-a-half years, said it was sad that many non-Malays in the country were taken in by Anwar's multi-ethnic stand.

"Today, he is portraying a totally different image and it is sad that quite a lot of non-Malays believe in this man. He is saying today that he wants to abolish the NEP (New Economic Policy) and that is music to their ears.

"We are so communal that we cannot evaluate a person objectively," said Dr Chandra, who was one of five speakers at *The Star*-Asian Centre for Media Studies Public Forum on the 2008 Malaysian General Election at Menara Star yesterday.

Dr Chandra recalled that when Anwar was Education Minister, he had compelled schools to switch from using (the term) Bahasa



Animated talk: Sim making a point at the forum yesterday.

Malaysia to Bahasa Melayu.

"Tunku Abdul Rahman wanted the use of Bahasa Malaysia to bring all the communities together and he (Anwar) forced Bahasa Melayu upon the school system. He was also responsible for putting non-Chinese educated administrators in Chinese schools."

Dr Chandra said that Anwar, in dealing with the Kampung Jawa clash between the Hindus and Indian Muslims in Penang, had said then that "he would make sure the temple bells would not ring in the country anymore".

Dr Chandra said the most important quality of a leader in a multi-ethnic country was honesty and when a leader spoke on sensitive ethnic issues, he must say the same

thing to non-Malays as to the Malays.

"You cannot play games because it is very dangerous," he said.

Dr Chandra also said that although Barisan Nasional was flawed, there was no other coalition in the country.

Speaking of his "bitter experience", he said the Opposition tried to form an alliance called Barisan Alternatif (BA), comprising PAS, DAP, Parti Keadilan Nasional and Parti Rakyat Malaysia, and he was tasked with forming a Just Malaysia manifesto for the 1999 elections.

"BA did very well and it was one of the best performances by the Opposition but after the elections, PAS decided to pursue an ultraconservative Islam in Terengganu and this made it difficult for us.

"DAP emphasised on an aggressive type of secularism which did not understand the role of religion in the country. A deep chasm was developed and the Opposition could not hold the middle ground and I don't think they can for many, many years," he said.

On Sunday, former Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik also lashed out at Anwar and described him as a "chameleon" who changed colour depending on the type of audience he was facing.

Relating his experience with Anwar, Dr Lim said: "I was with him as a member of the Cabinet Committee on Education from 1987 to 1990 when Anwar was Education Minister and he gave us hell."

"One day, I even asked him if he wanted to remove Chinese schools. I told him if that was what he wanted, he should say so," he said on efforts taken at that time by the Chinese community to remove Section 21 of the Education Act 1961, which gave powers to the minister to close down schools and to change national-type schools to national schools.

"We argued for five years but he never moved," Dr Lim said, adding that it was Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak who repealed the section when he became Education Minister.

