

rid of the root of it, you will see changes in leaps and bounds. In the civil service, like the police, it is a cancer that needs to be addressed.

We never had this problem until the 80s. One of the things that precipitated corruption is Umno itself, because if you want to be *ketua bahagian* (division head), you have to dish out money. What happens if Keadilan becomes as big as Umno one day?

I never thought of it that way, but yes, the lines are blurred. But we have some mechanisms to ensure this never happens. As for the rest of society, we must fall back on our upbringing, dos and don'ts, and correct the basics.

Speaking of basics, what would you change in our education policy?

The curriculum must encompass the spiritual aspects of life. Not just books. If you can read the Quran, that does not mean you are good. Do you apply what you study in the Quran? You must look at the human being as a whole - his mind, spirit and physicality. And that can be applied in whatever you study. You must be able to accept things that are alien to you. I accept many things, that's why I'm easy to control! (laughs)

But I never thought deeply about this. I leave the thinking to Anwar. (laughs)

If you don't give children the basics to understand issues, how are they going to evolve? I questioned (Education Minister Datuk Seri) Hishamuddin Hussein in 2004 on the World Bank Report which states that we spend less than a few Third World countries on primary education. He said we are alright in primary, so we dump money on tertiary education. That is wrong. You don't have the foundation, how are you going to build on it? My question was not answered.

Those days, getting seven As

is a great thing. Today, you have students getting 20 As! Has this and the increase in the number of universities helped in any way to improve the standard of education and graduates?

We can build universities, but if you don't have enough quality teaching staff, then you churn out sub-standard grads. We need quality educators. You talk about human capital but you don't groom them.

Many private firms would rather take a diploma holder from an international college than a graduate from a local university.

Look at the Scorpene submarines we are buying. Do you know we don't have the crew to man the submarines? Who is going to operate and maintain them? What is an 'A'? I did not get many As. Bill Gates did not get As. The problem with Malaysia is that it likes to go into a lot of competitions and get medals for this and that ... and I hear they pay for them!

What is Keadilan's membership now? The complaint is that there are not enough forms, as after the election, more people want to join the party. We never had the exact number of members. On the night we launched the party, there were so many forms and so many people. We had forms in our newsletters, etc. The task now is to put all these forms in a database and we have people to do that now. It is not easy. We also have to vet the members and then decide which branch or division they should belong to.

Talking about your ultimate goal to run the country, the problem is not getting BN members to cross over, but what happens after that. Will you have the support of the police and the armed forces? I know that the armed forces are loyal to the Agong and the government. They have to give their loyalty there. Now the



police ... the lower ranking ones are just doing their job.

When I was called to give a statement, they were quite apologetic about it. From what I see, many of them also switch with the leadership.

It is ironic that Pakatan Rakyat performed the way it did in the election with some of Abdullah's policies, like reforms to the electoral process and allowing alternative views.

I admit that. Many people who tried to promote change, like B.J. Habibie in Indonesia, took the brunt of previous excesses, which they are now trying to address.

You think criticisms against Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi within and outside the party are justified?

Now he has a wake up call and he has to work harder. Umno became weak under his leadership but the rest of the country gained. Of course,

if you are an Umno member you would say getting rid of him would be justified, but the question is, who after Abdullah? They are almost the same gang! Abdullah is a nice guy, maybe a bit slow, but I would rather have him than others in Umno. He is a nice man, always in the background, also some skeletons in the closet, but not many.

But in Abdullah's defence, you cannot undo 22 years of Mahathirism in four years. He did not take firm steps when he could. Once you are at the top, you can make the changes.

This goes back to grassroots support. He does not command as much as he should and this goes against his own political survival.

Kepala Batas not bad what. Ya, but ... in Umno itself, Abdullah is not seen as a firm leader.

How do you placate those who are still suspicious of Keadilan because of your origins? You started off as a bunch of very angry Umno members.

Many of them, Ezam Mohd Nor, Hanafiah Ahmad, Ruslan Kassim went under ISA detention. A majority of them did not have anything when we started Keadilan. They came on the bandwagon when we were at our lowest. This should give people faith. Like in Anwar's case, after being beaten to a pulp, being incarcerated and separated from your family, what more convincing do you need?

But it is a learning experience. Even Abdullah is learning ... trying to change things from within. Even us - Keadilan on one side, DAP on one side and PAS on the other. It is untested waters. But if we can handle this we can handle anything. Look at Kit Siang and (PAS president) Ustaz (Abdul) Hadi (Awang); if they can work together, we are okay.

We all look at Anwar as the

moderate man. Of course, there was his time in Abim, but how has he become the voice of moderation between DAP and PAS?

I remember we were in New York for the Council on Foreign Relations meeting when Anwar was deputy prime minister. There was a question for him: "Mr Deputy Prime Minister, you wrote an article when you were Abim president that 'East is East and West is West but Islam is the Best'."

Anwar replied: "Thank you for reading an article I wrote when I was 17!"

Of course, you mature and I really believe youth must have idealism, because if you lose that you have nothing. I see some young people with loads of idealism and that gives me hope.

So, if there is to be change, this is the generation which will effect it?

The transition has to be managed. I don't want it to be turmoil. This is the fear that has been instilled in Malaysians. When you go to Parliament you will hear: "You nak demokrasi? You tengok Indonesia, bagaimana demokrasi dipelakukan! Apa you dapat?" (You want democracy? Look at Indonesia, at how it was practised there. What did you get?)

Of course there is some truth in that, but we need to manage it.

I think we have done well, we have five Pakatan states, many of us were not in governance before and now we are okay.

Would you agree that the March 8 election has buried the bogeyman of May 13 as many people are voting across racial lines?

Yes I would never have thought 10 years ago that PAS would vote for DAP and vice-versa. The words of Karpal Singh over PAS's Islamic state still rings in my ears: "Over my dead body!" But you see, they can work together in spite of the differences in ideology.

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extra!

conversations

yourself", but then during the elections, there were a lot of misleading things that happened on the night of the counting because I had won on first count. But the whole nation saw the news crawler saying I had lost. And because of that news crawler, he (the imam) had come to the counting centre and went up the stage, before an SPR (Election Commission) officer told him that he had not won yet. It was then that someone came to him with the PM on the phone and the PM told him to follow procedure.

Fast forward to March 8. Did you see such a strong wind of change?
It was providence that gave me the win. Thousands of new voters had crept into Permatang Pauh. I did not have enough knowledge to gauge how many votes I would have won. I don't believe in the crystal ball.

But your husband told us he expected the results. In fact, he said Pakatan Rakyat actually won the election.
Ya ... he gets all this and that while I'm in the background trying to figure out what's happening. But he works hard and he meets lots of people. People say the two of us as a pair appeal to the voters - he is the firebrand and me, the calming, caring side. Just as DAP has its style of campaigning, PAS has its brand too.

Do you believe now with your huge representation in Parliament, that you can silence some of the BN "bully" boys?
No. They have their role to play and our guys too, some of them are loose cannons. We can't discipline them too much, this is what makes things less sleepy in Parliament.

Can we expect better quality debates?
Yes. Now you see many MPs making an effort to attend Parliament. I see the BN side working harder. Even (former International Trade and Industry Minister Tan Sri) Rafidah Aziz and (Gua Musang MP) Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (notorious for being absent from Parliament) are there. Questions and answers are also of better quality, although their answers leave much to be desired as they can skirt around issues and say a minister may not answer a question! That's why when I am in Parliament, I wish I could speak well like Anwar. I wish I had the oratory skills.

We observed some troubling things with the new Parliament session. The Speaker said "no supplementary questions", then the prime minister said "Ok, one or two allowed-lah". Then (PKR vice-president and Gombak MP) Azmin

All wanted to refer (Tourism Minister Datuk Seri) Azalina Othman to the select committee for lying to the House, but the Speaker disallowed it. What do we do when Standing Orders are not observed to encourage good and fair debates?
Our country has never learnt to have an effective Opposition. As a young girl, I read an article about when Tun Abdul Razak was in Australia and he was asked by reporters about the Opposition in Malaysia. His reply was "we don't have an Opposition". That still strikes a chord with me.

After 50 years of independence, we have finally broken the two-thirds majority. But it is set in stone how the Speaker behaves. (Speaker Tan Sri) Pandikar Amin (Mulla) however says he wants to go on record as being fair. Of course, there are (deputy speakers) Ronald Kinmi ... but (Datuk) Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar doesn't even look at us, which is very sad. But like the two-thirds, changes here must also come from the people.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has never been highly regarded due to the lack of a follow-up after its findings are announced. How can we give the PAC more bite and restore the people's faith in it?
The PAC in other countries is chaired by the Opposition ... except here!

What to do? We are asking but they still have not come to terms with this new political environment that we are experiencing.
People must be with us. With all the SPR fraud, and now they deny everything, my goodness!

It seems your colleagues on the other side of the aisle in Parliament are in denial over the composition of wakil rakyat in Parliament today.
Well, they do so at their own peril, but perhaps now they will jump over (laughs).

Why were you denied the first question at Parliament's opening session which is usually reserved for the Opposition Leader?
Well, the first question is usually a feel-good question for the PM to answer and that will be reported widely in the media.

Many who watched your husband's trial thought it made a mockery of the judicial system. The current Inspector-General of Police and Attorney General were condolts to his prosecution and conviction. If Anwar were to become PM, how is he going to come to terms with working with these people?
I think there is some motion set now with the Bar Council and civil society demanding



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Datuk Shahrir Samad as PAC chairman was good as he allows debate.

Look at the PKEZ (Port Klang Free Zone) issue. There were no straight answers. How can the transport minister give a letter of guarantee when only the finance minister can do so? It's a Triple A guarantee you know! We asked but they have been not forthcoming with their answers. It was kind of glossed over.

Do you think the PAC can perform better with better representation, especially now when you have experts in the respective fields? Problem is, when the selection process takes place, the right people are not selected. How do we address this?
(DAP adviser and Ipoh Timur MP Lim) Kit Siang is there. (DAP deputy chairman and Kluang MP Dr Tan) Seng Guan is coming in. We have Azmin coming in. We have asked for more representation but they won't give it.

You have 81, they (Limno) have 79. It must be proportionate.

answers. But I think we can hold on to them because they can say that they were (acting) under instruction. From what I see about Anwar ... the first post he got was deputy minister in the prime minister's department; on the first day at work, he saw his own file and found out how much they had been following him from his time in Abim (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement). But he said "whatever is done, is done, you start anew". Sometimes, you think he would have revenge on his mind. But I know Anwar the man and he said "let's forgive and move on".

For him, it is more for the people. That's what makes him tick. That's the main thing. Having gone through the worst humiliation, he has come out stronger.

We have seen two big changes with the Anti-Corruption Agency and the judiciary.

I wouldn't call it that. Are these moves or changes? I stand corrected.
You see, with corruption, once you get