

Putrajaya challenge

Anwar has a chance to change ways of thinking and doing things

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WHILE the cry for reforms is surely getting louder, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim faces a less distant reality: the here-and-now mess of flash floods, inflation, the now-you-see-them-now-you-don't essential goods and some such jumble of chaos. Yes, that is a plate filled to the brim. But who said being in Anwar's position is easy. It is puzzling, though, to note that there are a fair few out there who want his seat in Putrajaya given the national headaches that come with it. True, the PM must help take Malaysia to a particular future. He can't help but start from the present, which is a mess in many ways of seeing.

Start with flash floods, a good stand-in for all the here-and-now mess. Here is why such things keep happening. Our leaders, at all levels, seldom think of our tomorrows when fiddling with our todays. Take Wednesday's flash floods in 21 places in the city and its suburbs. If they take a deep dive, they will realise that our unchecked chase of progress is anything but that. We build on everything and anything without realising that what was pervious has become impervious. Disturb the land, you disturb the hydrology of the area. Didn't the experts advise them? Or did they just not listen? Sure, these are

today's problems, but they are a result of what we did and didn't do in all our yesterdays. Anwar has a chance to change such ways of thinking and doing. We hope he makes the most out of the moment he is given.

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But our leaders aren't the only ones to be blamed. Bad habits of Malaysians (count the developers and their contractors among them) are also the reason for the

recurring flash floods. They must be censured and changed. There are some who must be educated and there are some who must be punished. Both must be done if we want our drains to not be the nation's trash can. There are some among us who are quick to blame the SMART Tunnel for not preventing flash floods. The fact is the SMART Tunnel is to prevent river flooding, not flash floods. Besides, not much water from clogged drains can head the SMART Tunnel way. Try declogging and deepening the drains. And, most importantly, know this: trash is meant for trash cans, not drains. No amount of declogging will save us if we continue to dump garbage in drains. If there ever was a disease that is keeping the country from going forward, then apathy must be it.

Inflation, invisible essential goods and some such similar Malaysian madness are in search of a more permanent solution, too. Our statisticians tell us that our headline inflation was 4.5 per cent in September, but it sure doesn't feel that way when we head to the grocers. Call it the problem of numbers. An averaged out number, which core or headline inflation is, somehow isn't real to the consumer. At the grocers', it sure feels like inflation is 10 per cent, especially with the ringgit having depreciated 8.3 per cent against the greenback. Yet, Putrajaya's answer to this is to send an inflation task force around the country to tame prices. How about something more permanent than a task force of six in search of a purpose? Looks like everyone is waiting for the PM. No one should envy him.