

# Will reform agenda be carried out with Anwar as PM?

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**DESPITE** rejoicing upon Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim becoming prime minister, certain questions arise.

-Firstly, will the reform agenda become an obsolete discourse?

The principal point of the Reformasi movement since 1998 has been to reform patronage in the political system.

The movement began as a loose collective of activists. Over the years, it galvanised organisations demanding institutional and structural reforms.

One of the organisations born out of the Reformasi movement was Bersih, a coalition of advocates for a clean and fair election.

Compelled by the need to respond to civil society's pressure, Malaysia's gov-

ernmental system has steadily undergone structural reform.

Despite the slow pace, some changes have taken place, such as the abolishment of the Internal Security Act, the right to public assembly, and the repeal of section 15A of the Universities and University Colleges Act.

Furthermore, since 2008, cases of phantom voters have hardly been heard of.

The government has changed its approach and is more responsive to people's demands.

The Reformasi movement prompted the evolution of the electoral coalition.

Since 1974, it had always been between Barisan Nasional with pacts like Barisan Sosialis in the 1960s, Ang-

katan Perpaduan Ummah alongside Gagasan Rakyat in the 1990s or non-aligned parties.

When the Reformasi movement gained momentum, the opposition formed coalitions such as Barisan Alternatif, Pakatan Rakyat, and its current form, Pakatan Harapan.

Twenty-four years ago, it would have been unthinkable for BN to sit at the same table with DAP and PKR.

BN and PH now form the Perak and Pahang governments.

The Reformasi movement as a democratic catalyst has led Malaysians to accept diversity and pragmatism in politics.

Nevertheless, by forging ties between former adversaries, does it

mean the reform agenda will be at a crossroads and become an obsolete discourse?

To accommodate conflicting ideologies and interests in the coalition government, the agenda needs to be reoriented.

Strictly speaking, the new government may bend the rules but never the principles.

On the other hand, racial, and religious issues are potent modalities in Malaysia's politics.

Communal politics in its antagonistic form returned after the 14th General Election in 2018.

These included reactions to fireman Muhammad Adib Mohd Kasim's death in 2018 and the attempt to

ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

The previous PH government failed miserably to manage these narratives.

Religious bigots are now spreading rumours linking Israel to Anwar, stoking fears of another May 13 incident.

The government must prevent communal politics from destroying the younger generation's mind and breaking up the country's harmony.

Only then can the reform agenda be carried out.

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