

A photograph of Anwar Ibrahim, a Malaysian politician, waving his right hand to a large crowd of people. He is wearing a light pink shirt and glasses. In the background, a mosque with a blue dome and minarets is visible under a clear sky. The crowd consists of many people, some wearing red caps, and several hands are raised in the air, mirroring Anwar's gesture.

**Winning Strategies**  
**of**  
**ANWAR**  
**IBRAHIM**

**Mutharasan**

**LLB.HONS (LONDON); CLP; MBA (UNIVERSITY MALAYA)**

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**PUSTAKA PERDANA**



**1012279**

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*Published by*

**Focus Media Enterprise** (001789487-P)  
Suite 2-1-12, Menara KLH Business Centre  
2 ½ Mile, Jalan Ipoh  
51200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Tel : 603-2381 1156 Fax : 603-2381 1158  
Email : focus\_media@ymail.com

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First Published 2008

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ISBN 978-983-4421-0-7

*Printed by*  
Perniagaan Krisan  
51200 Kuala Lumpur

# Contents

Preface	6
<b>CHAPTER 1:</b> INTRODUCTION	11
<b>CHAPTER 2:</b> ANWAR IBRAHIM – A BRIEF BACKGROUND	20
<b>CHAPTER 3:</b> LESSONS FROM PREVIOUS GENERAL ELECTIONS	40
<b>CHAPTER 4:</b> STRATEGIES OF ANWAR IBRAHIM STRATEGY 1 : PRESSURE ON THE ELECTION COMMISSION	62
<b>CHAPTER 5 :</b> STRATEGIES OF ANWAR IBRAHIM STRATEGY 2 : EXPOSING THE FAILURES OF THE BN GOVERNMENT	69
<b>CHAPTER 6:</b> STRATEGIES OF ANWAR IBRAHIM STRATEGY 3 : ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION AGAINST BN GOVERNMENT	74

<b>CHAPTER 7:</b> STRATEGIES OF ANWAR IBRAHIM STRATEGY 4 : RELEASING THE V.K.LINGAM TAPE	<b>78</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8:</b> STRATEGIES OF ANWAR IBRAHIM STRATEGY 5 : UNITING THE OPPOSITION PARTIES	<b>84</b>
<b>CHAPTER 9:</b> STRATEGIES OF ANWAR IBRAHIM STRATEGY 6 : PURSUING A MULTI-RACIAL PARTY CONCEPT	<b>90</b>
<b>CHAPTER 10:</b> STRATEGIES OF ANWAR IBRAHIM STRATEGY 7 : FIELDING NURUL IZZAH ANWAR AS A PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE	<b>99</b>
<b>CHAPTER 11:</b> STRATEGIES OF ANWAR IBRAHIM STRATEGY 8 : CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAMPAIGN SPOTS	<b>104</b>
<b>CHAPTER 12:</b> WEAKNESSES OF BARISAN NASIONAL	<b>108</b>
<b>CHAPTER 13:</b> ISSUES THAT WERE CAPITALISED BY ANWAR IBRAHIM	<b>148</b>
<b>CHAPTER 14:</b> FACTORS THAT FAVOURED ANWAR IBRAHIM	<b>157</b>

<b>CHAPTER 15:</b> WHAT IS NEXT FOR BN AND ITS COMPONENT PARTIES?	<b>181</b>
<b>CHAPTER 16:</b> WHAT IS NEXT FOR PAKATAN RAYAT AND ITS COMPONENT PARTIES?	<b>195</b>
<b>CHAPTER 17:</b> ANWAR IBRAHIM'S PROSPECT OF BECOMING THE OPPOSITION LEADER AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SODOMY ALLEGATIONS	<b>203</b>
<b>CHAPTER 18:</b> IN CONCLUSION ....WILL ANWAR FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT AND BECOME PRIME MINISTER?	<b>219</b>

## Preface

The outcome of the 2008 Malaysian General Elections has changed the Malaysian political landscape as never before in its 50 years of history as an independent nation. The future of Malaysian politics too seems to be heading for exciting times, with new twists and unexpected events taking place almost every other day. It appears that this trend is set to continue at least for the next 4 years or until the next general election takes place to decide once and for all who has the majority in parliament to form the next federal government.

### **Why this Book ...**

Since the night of March 8, 2008, every day has been marked by much discussions and analysis among my friends on the outcome of the elections. I realized that there were many hidden issues and strategies in this general election and that the outcome of the elections was not a miracle or due to sheer luck. It was made possible because of meticulous planning and hard work, diligently carried out by the opposition parties during the last one or two years.

In particular the opposition's success seems to be due to the political acumen and genius of one man. His untiring efforts and whirlwind tours of the country, attracting and convincing thousands of Malaysians through his oratorical skills made a marked differ-

ence. He was able to attract the young and the old; Malays, Chinese and Indians; as well as people from all walks of life and from every nook and corner of the country. Needless to say that man is Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

When I compared the events that have been happening for the last one or two years with the outcome of the results of the 12<sup>th</sup> general elections, I found a pattern of intelligent strategies and intricate plans. As I compiled and organized them, I realized that the resulting material was ripe for a book. With some encouragement from my friends, I decided to embark on writing this book.

### **Who am I to write this Book ...**

At a very early age I became interested in politics and affairs of political parties in Malaysia. Whenever, party elections of BN component parties were held, I used to follow the developments closely. The political developments in other nations also interested me. Of particular interest was that of India and the state of Tamil Nadu due to my roots. That interest also broadened my outlook about politics as Indian politics are never short of excitement and controversies. As I became a voracious reader of local political affairs, over the years, I became familiar with the prevailing political issues, party elections and general elections in Malaysia.

Having joined as a member of MIC at a young age, I had the opportunity of getting involved in many MIC party elections and developed close rapport with some of the MIC leaders. My involvement in MIC also gave me an opportunity to familiarize myself with the issues affecting the Malaysian Indians and their politics. Perhaps that could be the reason why the Indian issues are discussed in little more detail in this book.

I had also worked in many previous general elections, for the Barisan Nasional. That experience afforded me the inner workings of the Malaysian general elections at the ground level, especially from the perspective of Barisan Nasional. Probably that is the reason why I have devoted a chapter to discuss the weaknesses of the

Barisan Nasional, a subject close to my heart, as I have personally witnessed how the Barisan parties would approach and campaign for the votes from the different communities. Therefore, I could easily identify the flaws and weaknesses in the campaigns of the Barisan during the 2008 general elections.

In the past, if any of the constituencies where a by-election was being held was nearby, out of interest I would spend as much time as possible there, listening to the *ceramahs* and trying to figure out the local and national issues over which the opposing parties were clashing.

For the 2008 General elections, I also travelled around, wherever I could, listening to the *ceramahs* of both the Barisan and the opposition parties while following the political events closely through newspapers and internet. Of course there were also exchanges of information with friends all over the country. All these experiences of mine were very helpful and instrumental in the writing of this book as I myself could relate personally to many of the issues raised and discussed.

### **This is an objective analysis...**

All the views, analysis, predictions and hypothetical examples that have been expressed in this book are purely on an objective basis. Criticisms if any, about a political party or leader are only intended to be a political analysis with no other personal agenda or ulterior motives.

I must confess that I do not know Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim personally and no interviews or conversations were conducted with him or his family members about this book. All the information about him presented in this book, however personal in nature was acquired only through research of newspaper articles, documents and through my own knowledge. I have been following Anwar's political involvement with interest since he joined UMNO. I still vividly remember the newspaper stories about the famous press conference by the then Prime Minister Dr Mahathir and Anwar Ibrahim

in 1982 which was held to announce the entry of Anwar Ibrahim into UMNO. My first encounter with Anwar Ibrahim was in 1983 when he came to open the National MIC Youth convention as the Youth Leader of UMNO. That was also the first occasion where I heard his spell binding speech.

Since then I have attended many of Anwar Ibrahim's *ceramahs* and apart from listening to him, there had been no other acquaintances with him. Therefore, all what I have stated about him in this book are purely based on research and analysis and with objectivity.

However we view it, the manner in which the 2008 general elections was fought and its outcome is mind boggling and would have far reaching consequences for the future of Malaysian politics. There are also many other political implications and this book might shed light on some of them.

Happy reading!

**- MUTHARASAN**



## INTRODUCTION

“

There is only one individual  
who can be credited for the  
incredible results of this 12<sup>th</sup>  
General elections and it is  
none other than  
Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim!

”

**I**t was March 8, 2008, the day of the 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysian General Elections!

I had dutifully voted in my constituency of Petaling Jaya Selatan in the afternoon and was preparing to leave my house to join a group of friends to see the live telecast of the election results in a friend's house. It was about 6.30 pm when my hand-phone beeped. It was a text message from a friend: “Negri Rajagopalu lost. Teluk Kemang gone”.

It meant that the MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress, a component party of ruling Barisan Nasional representing the Indian Com-

munity candidate for the Port Dickson state seat had lost and that the MIC's parliament seat of Teluk Kemang had also been lost to the opposition. Thinking it must be a joke, I called the friend who had sent the message, "Was that what you were wishing for or was that what you heard?" I asked him.

"No! That was from a friend of mine in Port Dickson. It is the truth," my friend was serious!

"But it cannot be! However you view it Barisan cannot lose Teluk Kemang. It is one of the safest seats. Furthermore, I know how the Malays would generally vote and Teluk Kemang is a Malay-majority seat," I argued.

Then, as streams of such text messages kept pouring in through the hand phones of Malaysians throughout the country (Malaysians were no longer relying on the television to deliver the election results but on their hand phones, another new Malaysian phenomenon), it became apparent that the Barisan Nasional (hereinafter referred to as BN - "National Front" in English) the party which had ruled Malaysia since Independence, was heading for a colossal loss never seen in the history of Malaysian politics, not even as that experienced in the 1969 elections!

### **The results of the 2008 elections...**

To me, a "student" of politics, the results of the General Elections 2008 (hereinafter referred to as GE 2008) was mind-boggling. I have been actively following Malaysian politics for the past many years, analyzing with friends and interested groups and often predicting political outcomes quite accurately and consistently. But neither I nor the many political pundits could have predicted the results of the 12<sup>th</sup> General elections in the manner it unfolded. As Jocelyn Tan of *The Star* newspaper wrote, "It was a night when predictions, assumptions and stereotypes went flying out of the window" (The Star, 10 March 2008).

That night, Lim Kit Siang, the national advisor to the Democratic Action Party (DAP), one of the main opposition parties in

## Standing of political parties in Malaysian Parliament after the 12th General Election 2008

	<b>BN</b>	<b>PAS</b>	<b>DAP</b>	<b>PKR</b>	<b>Total</b>
PERLIS	3	0	0	0	3
KEDAH	4	6	0	5	15
KELANTAN	2	9	0	3	14
TERENGGANU	7	1	0	0	8
PULAU PINANG	2	0	7	4	13
PERAK	13	2	6	3	24
PAHANG	12	0	0	2	14
SELANGOR	5	4	4	9	22
W.P. KUALA LUMPUR	1	1	5	4	11
W.P. PUTRAJAYA	1	0	0	0	1
NEGERI SEMBILAN	5	0	2	1	8
MELAKA	5	0	1	0	6
JOHOR	25	0	1	0	26
W.P. LABUAN	1	0	0	0	1
SABAH	24	0	1	0	25
SARAWAK	30	0	1	0	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>222</b>

## State Assembly Seats won by Political Parties at the 12th General Election 2008

	BN	PAS	DAP	IND	PKR	Total
PERLIS	14	1	0	0	0	15
KEDAH	14	16	1	1	4	36
KELANTAN	6	38	0	0	1	45
TERENGGANU	24	8	0	0	0	32
PULAU PINANG	11	1	19	0	9	40
PERAK	28	6	18	0	7	59
PAHANG	37	2	2	1	0	42
SELANGOR	20	8	13	0	15	56
N. SEMBILAN	21	1	10	0	4	36
MELAKA	23	0	5	0	0	28
JOHOR	50	2	4	0	0	56
SABAH	59	0	1	0	0	60
SARAWAK	<i>No Elections for State Assembly</i>					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>505</b>

Malaysia that had won 28 Parliament seats, coined the word “*political tsunami*” to describe the astounding results of GE 2008. And what a tsunami it was that swept across the nation! The shocking outcome remained etched in my mind for the next few days. The question that kept popping up was “How could it have happened?”

The results were unbelievable. In his own constituency, the Prime Minister had his majority reduced substantially. The “Jewel in the crown” for UMNO and BN, the state of Selangor, had fallen to the opposition with a majority of 16 seats! The new Chief Minister of the state (referred to as *Menteri Besar* in Malay) was Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim of the opposition party PKR (*Parti Keadilan Rakyat* meaning People’s Justice Party) who only the year before had lost in the Ijok by-election to the MIC-BN candidate K.Parthiban by a majority of 1,850 votes. This time around Khalid had reversed his fortunes by winning the same seat with a majority of 1,920 votes!

The BN fared no better in the state of Perak. Even the humble and pleasant disposition of its Menteri Besar, Tajol Rosli could not save it from falling into the hands of the opposition. Even the constituency of Sungai Siput in Perak, a stronghold of the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) for the last 34 years, was not spared either. Pre-election rhetoric by its incumbent member of Parliament Dato Seri S. Samy Vellu, such as “The whole army can come but I will still win” and “Jeyakumar can contest 25 times but I will still win in Sungai Siput” were silenced by the resounding victory of the opposition candidate, Dr Michael Jeyakumar.

As expected, the states of Penang and Kedah were won over by the opposition. The Islamic Party of Malaysia (referred to as *Parti Islam Se Malaysia* in Malay or *PAS*) one of the opposition parties, retained its tight grip on Kelantan by winning 39 out of the 45 seats. It was not only a case of states or constituencies being lost to the opposition; BN stalwarts were also dropping like nine-pins. Federal Ministers such as Zainuddin Mydin, Aziz Shamsudin and Sharizat Jalil were also not spared. Reputed

strong candidates like UMNO treasurer Abdul Azim lost in the safe rural seat of Batu Gantang in Perak. Unknowns from the opposition made sweeping victories. A white-bearded professor by the name of Ramasamy from the DAP making his election debut was able to knock out Dr Koh Tsu Koon, the Penang Chief Minister of 17 years by a majority of about 10,000 votes in a Chinese majority seat.

The MIC's upper echelon was wiped out: the President, the Deputy President, two Vice-Presidents, the National Youth and Women leaders, all lost in a row! The Malaysian Chinese Association (a member of the ruling BN and referred to as MCA) lost its Chinese ground while Gerakan (another member of the BN coalition) lost 10 out of the 12 Parliament seats it contested.

All in all, the opposition won 5 states in West Malaysia. They also won 10 out of the 11 Parliament seats in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. However they could not take over the political administration of Kuala Lumpur as by law it has always been controlled by Dewan Bandaraya, or City Hall which is in turn controlled by the Federal government.

In West Malaysia the opposition secured more popular votes than BN. The opposition secured approximately 51.3 % of the popular votes in West Malaysia while the BN could only secure 48.7 %. In West Malaysia the BN captured 85 parliament seats while the

*Prominent BN Leaders who lost In GE 2008*



Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon



Datuk Zainuddin Bin  
Maidin



Datuk M Kayveas

opposition won 80 parliament seats, thereby for the first time denying the BN its two third majority in parliament. In total the opposition won 82 parliamentary constituencies. It is clear that BN government at the federal level today survives because of its support from the BN component parties in Sabah and Sarawak.

### **Who made it possible?**

There is only one individual who can be credited for the incredible results of this 12<sup>th</sup> General elections and it is none other than Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim! Of course he could not have done it without the other opposition leaders like Lim Kit Siang of DAP and Tok Guru Nik Aziz-Hadi Awang of PAS. Similarly, the DAP and PAS, separately or jointly, could not have also turned the tide without Anwar Ibrahim. It should be noted that DAP and PAS had previously contested many elections but not with similar results, whereas this was the first general election faced by Anwar since his imprisonment.

### **How Anwar made it possible ...**

This book is not an attempt to glorify Anwar Ibrahim or intended to be another round of “Barisan bashing”. It is a sincere attempt to give credit to where it is due and to record the hard work and political strategies employed by Anwar in bringing about results he desired. It is clear that the election outcome were not acci-



Dato Seri  
Sharizat Abdul Jalil



Dato Seri  
S. Samy Vellu



Dato Seri  
Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin

dental or miraculous but the result of sheer hard work, intelligent strategies and the political acumen of many opposition bigwigs as well as meticulous planning for the past two years. However it needed someone to bring the opposition together and make it all happen and that someone was none other than Anwar Ibrahim himself.

Having said that, it must be also pointed out that the contributions and sacrifices of the Alliance Party (the origin of the Barisan Nasional which negotiated the independence of Malaya from the British and ruled Malaysia from 1957 to 1974) and later the Barisan Nasional, in making Malaysia into what it is today should not be forgotten overnight. Although there may be many shortcomings and failures on the part of the BN, the prosperity and growth experienced by our country today and the decent livelihood we enjoy, without racial clashes and political unrest are all due to the genuine efforts of the Barisan Nasional Government. Let us also not forget that Anwar Ibrahim himself was nurtured by the same Barisan Nasional system for almost 16 years (from 1982 to 1998) and all his political popularity and the extensive influence he exerts today are due to his exposure through the Barisan Nasional system.

Therefore, in this book, instead of merely condemning the BN, attempts have been made to point out what the BN had failed to achieve and what they could do in future to regain their lost ground. The BN is inherently still strong and relevant, but they lost in many constituencies only because of their arrogant and over-confident attitudes and due to their failure in addressing and solving certain pressing issues.

Anwar was able to achieve his historical victory due to two main factors:

- (i) his ability to put in place certain strategies which ensured the votes for the opposition; and
- (ii) his ability to fully capitalize on the prevailing issues which were against the BN.

In addition there were two other factors which helped Anwar but which were not of his own manipulation:

- (i) the existing weaknesses of the BN;
- (ii) the prevailing factors that were favorable to the opposition

There is no doubt that Anwar Ibrahim is a political fighter and a visionary leader. He has the ability to think out of the box and was able to come up with new, innovative political strategies. Often he is able read into the future, a rare quality often exhibited by his nemesis Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed! Probably it is something that Mahathir himself might have taught his protégé in those good old days!

It is clear that as much as Anwar misunderstood and miscalculated Dr Mahathir's moves by confronting him head on, it is also obvious that Dr.Mahathir and the Badawi-Najib team also underestimated and misjudged Anwar. By hurling accusations and jailing him, Dr Mahathir thought he could "finish off" Anwar politically. Similarly, the BN leadership under Badawi thought that by keeping Anwar outside the UMNO fold, he would not be able to make any inroads into the stronghold of BN. Both were proven to be wrong!

Anwar rose from behind his prison bars! He continued his fight tirelessly even though he was imprisoned and as he himself has jokingly admitted, had been planning his future strategies in his prison cell, from the day he was incarcerated.

Before discussing Anwar's strategies for the GE 2008, we must study his political background to understand what he is made up of and what his political journey has been thus far. The next chapter is not intended to be an account of his life history, but an attempt to explain the main events that shaped his political journey and career.



## ANWAR IBRAHIM – A BRIEF BACKGROUND

“

Having been released in 2004, he took centre stage of the opposition platform and within the next three years he was able to unite the opposition against the mighty BN and go on to defeat the BN in 6 states in the GE 2008.

**I**f there is one thing that makes Anwar stand out in the Malaysian political scene, it is his relentless fighting spirit and his ability to break new political grounds never tried out by others. He does not give up easily. The manner in which he fought to rise above the myriad of problems he faced in his political journey is in fact astonishing. Any lesser a person would have easily succumbed to the situation. His inclination to think out of the box and to lead others into uncharted territories seems to be his hallmarks. What is amazing is his uncanny ability to change his political strategies according to the changing situations and environments to emerge victorious.

Before joining UMNO, as the leader of the Muslim youth organization ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia) and the MAYC (Malaysian Association of Youth Councils), his strategies were different, often battling against the government. After joining the ruling party UMNO, his strategies changed which explains his meteoric rise, within a span of 11 years, to become the Deputy President of the party and Deputy Prime Minister of the country.

When he was thrown out of UMNO and imprisoned for 6 years, he was yet again able to implement a different set of strategies, even from within prison. Having been released in 2004, he took centre stage of the opposition platform and within the next three years he was able to unite the opposition against the mighty BN and go on to defeat the BN in 6 states (including Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur) in the GE 2008. Due to his efforts, the BN was denied two-third majority in Parliament although he himself could not contest in the general election due to his conviction. Such events are unfolding for the first time in the history of Malaysia.



*Anwar as a young man*

His spell-binding and mesmerizing oratorical skills have always come in handy in getting his messages across effectively and in attracting large crowds, irrespective of race and religion. Although labeled as a radical or ultra-Malay in the past, his



# Winning Strategies of Anwar Ibrahim

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*Cover Photo :*

*Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Jalan Duta Court  
Complex, Kuala Lumpur on 7th August 2008*

This book is an objective analysis of the strategies and meticulous planning employed by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim which enabled the Opposition to win five states and 82 parliamentary constituencies at the recent 12th General Elections, thereby denying the ruling Barisan Nasional its two thirds majority in parliament. The author focuses on the details of the strategies planned by Anwar Ibrahim months before the general elections and how he successfully implemented them. The issues which were capitalized upon by Anwar Ibrahim and the factors that helped and propelled him to achieve his historic success are also discussed. Interesting theories and explanations are provided as to how the once indomitable Barisan Nasional was weakened over the years to be defeated so badly at the 2008 polls.

The book also traces the activities of Anwar Ibrahim from the time he was a student leader, his meteoric rise in UMNO and the government, as well as his relentless fight from within the prison walls to re-emerge on the political scene with even more pomp and glory. What more needs to be said when he can be referred to as the Prime Minister-in-waiting. This book also explores the implications of Anwar Ibrahim's prospect of returning to parliament as the Opposition Leader via a by-election in Permatang Pauh. Finally, the chances of the Pakatan Rakyat coalition forming the next federal government with Anwar Ibrahim as the Prime Minister are also discussed. There is no doubt that even after the General Elections 2008, Anwar Ibrahim's winning strategies continue to dominate the Malaysian political scene despite his recent arrest and charge.

This will be an interesting and thought provoking book for political analysts, enthusiasts, aspirants, politicians and all those interested in the Malaysian political scenario.



9 789834 421007

Published by :

**Focus Media Enterprise**

Kuala Lumpur

**Price : RM 25**

