

Central Executive Committee Report

By The Secretary-General, Sdr Lim Guan Eng

☞ Aspirations with accomplishments: Exercising power responsibly with a Competent, Accountable and Transparent governance ☞

Mandate for CAT

Changing the political landscape through the ballot box is always more effective than bullets. The former wins men and women's hearts and minds through free will, whilst the latter does neither and uses violence to force submission.

On March 8th 2008, Malaysians created history with their ballots. They voted for change. They voted for DAP as their agent of change to start a new chapter in Malaysian politics. Malaysians voted for change in such large numbers that they created a political tsunami that swept away BN's 2/3 majority and ushered in the new state governments of Kedah, Penang, Perak and Selangor together with Kelantan.

We have a responsibility to respond by transforming Malaysia into a country for all based on needs, qualification and merits. We have a responsibility to rebuild our beloved nation so that Malaysia is no longer divided along racial or religious lines. We have a responsibility to practise good governance based on CAT - Competency, Accountability, and Transparency – the first CAT government in Malaysia.

DAP recorded our best ever electoral performance since the 1969 general election:

- DAP almost doubled its national popular vote share from 9.7 percent (or 687,340 votes) in the 2004 elections to 18.1 percent in this election, winning 1,071,431 votes nationally.
- DAP's share of parliamentary seats increased from 12 seats in the 2004 elections to 28 seats (out of 47 seats contested);
- Our share of state seats increased from 15 seats in 2004 to 73 seats (out of 102 seats contested). (DAP holds 79 state seats nationwide if seats in Sarawak are included);
- Together with Parti KeAdilan Rakyat and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, the Opposition denied Barisan Nasional its two-thirds majority in Parliament;
- The Pakatan Rakyat forms the state governments of Penang, Perak, Selangor, Kedah, and Kelantan while breaking BN's two-thirds hold in Negeri Sembilan state assembly;
- DAP has also seen a breakthrough in Johore and Sabah (1990 was the last time both states had DAP representatives) while winning more seats in Malacca, Johor, Federal Territory, Kedah and Pahang as well as winning the first state seat in Sabah.

Effectively, UMNO/Barisan Nasional's one-party state is crumbling. In its place, a semblance of a two-coalition political system is slowly emerging. Within whatever limited powers we now have, it is our responsibility to prove the voters right that change is indeed happening.

The coming of age of DAP

After years of tirelessly fighting for a noble cause, often walking alone, our ideals and appeals were embraced by more Malaysians. Apart from electoral gains, the March 8th elections saw the coming of age of DAP:

- *Greater gender inclusiveness.* DAP fielded 19 female candidates nationwide, 14 of them are now elected representatives.
- *Greater multi-ethnic inclusiveness.* We fielded the largest share of Indian candidates of any Malaysian political party. Nearly 30 percent of our candidates are ethnic Indians and there are now 7 DAP MPs and 12 DAP SAs who are of ethnic Indian background.
- *New generation.* A third of DAP's candidates are aged below 30. Among our elected reps, more than a third are under 40.
- *Broadening of DAP's appeal.* Estimates shown that our candidates have obtained averagely 20 percent or higher of Malay votes in urban centres.

With an enlarged family, a membership from more diverse backgrounds representative of Malaysian population, it's the perfect time for us to move the party forward to realise the Malaysian First dream.

Remembering our roots

Before we venture into the future, it is important to know where we come from in order to know where we are heading.

I wish to pause here to pay tribute to all leaders and members who have worked untiringly for the party and the nation.

Rain or shine, our grassroots members have been with us without fail. You are the unsung hero that kept the party afloat during the dark days.

Since its inception, DAP suffered blow after blow of political persecution. Many leaders at one time or another have been detained under the infamous Internal Security Act or faced other forms of intimidation and bullying; persecution and victimization; financial and monetary deprivation and punishment.

It is appropriate for me, on behalf of the party, to register our greatest sympathy and solidarity with the families of the Hindraf 5 detainees - P. Uthayakumar, M Manoharan, R Kenghadharan, V Ganabatirau and T Vasanthakumar. We call on the government to release them immediately without condition.

Some of the personal sufferings of past detainees are perhaps already behind us. But it is our collective mission to ensure that our children and the next generation of political leaders would not have to go through the same ordeal.

DAP's reputation as the people's guardian is built upon the moral uprightness of our leaders who never wavered in the face of brutal might of UMNO/Barisan Nasional and their state apparatus.

To those who have departed, like Sdr. P.Patto and Sdr. Ahmad Nor, we will continue your struggle. In this regard, I take this opportunity to report to you the recent passing of Sdr. Mohd Nor Jetty, DAP Inaugural National Vice-Chairman, whose article I quoted in my speech at the DAP's 40th Anniversary Celebration in March 2006.

These are the towering personalities of all racial backgrounds that are testament to DAP's commitment to multi-racial politics since its formation in 1966 despite the many allegations that it is not.

In the states where we are part of the government, DAP is committed to see through dynamic economic growth through innovative leadership and CAT governance.

Guided by our social democratic ideals, we are committed to ensure that economic prosperity is shared among the people so that growth does not lead to inequality, wealth creation is accompanied by equitable wealth distribution. It is our vow to see that no one is left behind.

The Team

I would also like to thank the members of the outgoing Central Executive Committee, elected almost four years ago on 4th September 2004. DAP's much improved electoral support is a testimony of their hard work, dedication and loyalty to the party, and, most importantly, team spirit.

Some of the milestones of this CEC term include:

- In 2005, the party campaigned for the revival of the Third Vote and the election of local authorities;
- In March 2006, we celebrated DAP's 40th Anniversary and launched the "Malaysian First" second-phase struggle for DAP, with the objectives of transforming the party for the next 40 years, building the next generation of leaders and members, and reaching out to DAP's unconventional constituents. The party's Constitution was amended then to state its 18 objectives for a better Malaysia;
- In May 2007, a special congress was convened with the theme of "Winning Together for Malaysian First", where the party's Constitution was amended to allow postponement of the triennial party poll and election strategies for the general election were debated;
- Two sessions of leadership retreats in Cameron Highlands in January 2006 and January 2007 also contributed to a deeper understanding among national and state leaders of the need for the party to rejuvenate and reform;
- Focus on capacity-building by introducing modern management and election techniques as demonstrated by our DAP Election mascot, video clips, general election campaign songs and theme;
- Concerted recruitment drive of young and prominent professionals and NGO activists to project a modern people-friendly image.
- Members of the National Headquarters Management Committee, Sdr. Fong Kui Lun, Sdr. Tan Kok Wai, Sdri. Teresa Kok and myself, as well as other leaders and donors, were instrumental in the massive refurbishment of the National Headquarters to provide better and modern facilities to accommodate the growth of the party machinery;
- It is also during these four years that saw the revival of the party's organ The Rocket as a regular periodical under the leadership of National Publicity Secretary Sdri. Teresa Kok. Today, we are printing three languages, namely Malay, Chinese and English, on a monthly basis, and Tamil on an occasional basis;
- In this context, the contributions of the staff at our National Headquarters and other offices nation-wide should also be acknowledged.

Nonetheless, the two greatest achievements of the outgoing CEC team were its team spirit and its ability to recruit new members and men and women of leadership caliber, and provided them a platform that they long for to serve the party and the nation.

Mainstream party

Many of you did not believe me when I announced that we do not want to be in perpetual opposition but be a partner in power. Today, we are at the threshold of taking the party to the next level, the next 40 years. But the next few years are the most crucial in determining whether we can be a truly national party and partner in the Federal government.

We must transform DAP into a mainstream party perceived by most Malaysians as capable of providing strong and innovative leadership with the highest level of integrity.

First, integrity is our article of faith. The route we took was the less travelled one because we chose to be in politics not for personal gratification and enrichment but for our ideals and love for the nation. Integrity has been our trademark for the past 42 years but we must remind ourselves that power, however limited it is, is the ultimate test of one's integrity.

Second, we are a party for all and not just for our members only. Let us be clear that without the support from disgruntled and disillusioned members of UMNO, MCA, MIC and Gerakan, we would not have won so many seats, and with such massive margins. In the states we govern, we must herald a new paradigm in governance which strives for common public good and sets aside race, creed, religion, and political affiliation.

Third, we must engage Malaysians of all backgrounds for a deeper cultural understanding of various groups in our multi-ethnic society, and a greater sensitivity and tact in our engagement with the unconventional constituents.

In this election, DAP managed to transform itself as the party of choice for women, youth and ethnic Chinese and Indians, with a substantial increase in urban Malay support. Whether we can gain Malay support depends on our performance as a partner in power in Penang, Perak and Selangor. Especially as the leading government in Penang, to prove that we can take care of the Malays and deliver what BN cannot do in 50 years. The Penang State government is committed to wiping out hard-core poverty in Penang, attempting to do in one year what BN cannot do in 50 years. If we succeed, we will have taken an important first step in attracting sizable Malay core support.

Our challenge is to consolidate existing support while reaching out intensively to urban Malays, as well as Bumiputras of Sabah and Sarawak.

Once upon a time it seemed impossible to connect with the Malays due to a controlled mainstream Malay press that continues to paint DAP in bad light and UMNO's impregnable grip over the kampung. Our consolation is that the Internet has opened up new possibilities for political awareness and two-thirds of Malaysians now live in urban areas where UMNO the rural party *par excellence* is the weakest.

It is a great challenge to us, yet it is also a great opportunity for us to transform Malaysia through making DAP more inclusive in terms of ethnic profile.

Organisation

That the DAP went into the 2008 election as a united and cohesive team was surely the envy of our opponents. We entered the race with a highly motivated team consisting of respected veterans, well-regarded long-time second echelon leaders, and a host of young achievers, as well as many social activists who are community leaders in their own right before their foray into politics.

It is important to remind ourselves that as much as Barisan Nasional component parties were trounced by us, they were defeated by their own excesses of all kinds, internal sabotages, the failure to rejuvenate, and their inability to meet the wishes of a voting population that changed faster than them.

If we do not want to see the painful fate that befell some of the BN component parties to happen to DAP in the future, we must continue to be one strong team committed to our ideals and principles.

All elected representatives and appointed public office holders must recognise that they are elected or appointed on the party's recommendation. We are just mere individuals if not for the party. We must therefore have the party's and the people's interests at heart.

The mandate we received from Malaysian voters was a vote for change for the better, and a mandate for CAT governance. It is not a referendum for any individual or clique. We must constantly remind ourselves that the mandate can be withdrawn from us by the people and individual aggrandisement or cliquish politics is the last thing the voters want from DAP.

No organisation on earth can survive for a long period of time without constantly coming up with new ideas and new blood to reflect changes in society. But rarely is organisation transformed without pain.

In a small way, for both new and existing members, the post-March 8th experience is indeed a culture shock. As the number of new members joining with such encouraging speed, it will take a while for members to even know each other, and for the new members to appreciate DAP's past contributions and future aspirations. For our elected reps and members in states where we form government, it is a steep learning curve to learn to be in government after years of being perceived as a permanent opposition party.

Despite the potential difficulty in blending the old and new members, we must continue to increase the party's membership to enlarge our talent pool, as well as to extend our reach among unconventional constituents. At the same time, we must all strive to ensure that we don't fall into the pitfall of our opponents whose large membership have become a war-chest for internal strife and patronage politics that eventually resulted in them being voted out by a fed-up electorate.

Change is indeed happening

Let me assure you that change is indeed happening in the states that we govern, and, to a lesser extent, Barisan Nasional is grudgingly dancing to our tune.

Take for example, in my first week as the Chief Minister of Penang, I was criticised for introducing Open Tender policy. In Penang, the State Government became the first in the country to introduce an e-tender (*e-perolehan*) system to wipe out hanky-panky activities and corruption in the tendering process.

What is astonishing is that the Federal Government, in a limited way, decided that the toll collection concessionaire of the Penang Second Bridge will be awarded through open tender, which is estimated to save the nation of RM 18 billion over a 45-year concession period.

We believe that as government we are guardians of the people's interest, but not their masters. In Perak, residents of Malay planned villages and Chinese new villages are allowed to obtain freehold titles, generations after they first settled there. In Penang, a similar policy was introduced for residential housing while industrial and commercial lands are allowed to extend their lease to 99 years.

The Federal Government is flip-flopping on its economic policy which does not augur well for investment and to ensure that opportunity and resources are available equitably. The fuel hike in June 2008 is an example. As the Federal Government increased fuel price, the Penang State Government gave its poorer population a RM 100 cash payment as a gesture that we still remember them during their hardship, despite our limited financial resources.

Indeed, credible sources suggest that the Federal Government is seriously considering to adopt DAP's proposal to share Petronas' wealth with the middle class and the poorer strata of our population in the coming budget. DAP proposed that cash grant of RM 6,000 per annum to be given to families with a combined income of less than RM 6,000 per month whereas individuals that make less than RM 3,000 per month be given RM 3,000 per annum.

DAP is unashamedly a social democratic party that is pro-growth, and business- and industry-friendly.

The Barisan Nasional economic model is riddled with personal interests at the expense of public goods and broad-based strategising. We believe that the business of the government is to get out of business. It is the obligation of the government to create through CAT principles an enabling environment for the business sector to compete among themselves and to contribute positively to the economy and well-being of the overall society, which must include a commitment to sustainable living and empathy for those in need. And, we are on our way to start a new paradigm in public-private partnerships for greater societal well-being.

The next tipping point

A tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behaviour crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire. The CAT principles are our answer to the next tipping point. We must not only spread them to as far and to as many people as possible, we must also realise them in governance.

The next tipping point is likely the Sarawak state election, which may be held in the next 24 months. Are we prepared organizationally and financially, and battle-ready to perform as well as the last state elections. That is the next big test for us.

One final note that deserves mention is that DAP endorses Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim as the alternative Prime Minister of Malaysia and is committed to the cooperation among Pakatan Rakyat parties on the basis of promoting CAT governance and to realise the Malaysian First dream. We accept no other leader. We, however, will not support any divisive ideology that pits one group of Malaysians against the other.

To be deserving of the people's support, we need to demonstrate what we can achieve and accomplish. Aspirations without accomplishments, they mean nothing and is just empty talk. That is why we must walk the talk, and prove we can deliver.

To accomplish our goals, we must first be united and work as part of a team. Remember TEAM means 'Together Each Achieves More'. We should be able to differentiate between leaders who talk but do not act. Leaders must show by example to be part of a team by attending meetings and participating with other leaders and members. No matter how brilliant an individual, without team spirit, we cannot succeed. Let us build team spirit, fellowship and unity by supporting and not tearing each other down.

Let me conclude by saying that the DAP's existence in Malaysian politics is to provide an ethical and moral leadership that professes and gives faith, hope and love; where the people must have faith that the government is there to help and not harm them; the government must give hope to the young that there is a bright future with equal opportunities, level playing field and social justice; and that the government must show love for the people based on human dignity, compassion and a caring society.