

DAP's covenant with Middle Malaysia 2010

When I first took over as DAP Secretary-General in 2004, my colleagues and I were determined to lead a party that aspires not to be in perennial opposition but to be in government. A political party that has no aspirations for political power to implement programs beneficial to the people has no right to exist.

When DAP first put forth this vision in 2005 on being a full partner in power within 10 years, few shared our hopes. But we had pinned our hopes on ordinary Malaysians yearning for change. DAP had persevered since 1966 due to our faith in Malaysians whether Muslims or non-Muslims wanting a fair deal, live in peace and harmony, prosper together and their children to grow up in a better world than they lived in.

DAP leaders had labored through those painful years of legal prosecution and political persecution bound by our ideals in a Malaysian nation for all and our faith in the people. Many felt our struggle futile because they lost faith in the people sharing these ideals and wanting a better Malaysia. But the real and tough leaders and members in the DAP never lost hope.

The political tsunami that was the 2008 general elections changed everything. No one expected change to happen so fast. The people have put their faith in us and we must repay their trust in us. Inexperienced though we were, we learned how to govern and we believe that Pakatan Rakyat has governed better in these two years than BN has in the last 20 years.

For instance in Perak, land is given free to the people regardless of race. In Penang hard-core poverty has been abolished in one year what BN could not do in 51 years. In Selangor water is given free. In all states money is handed back to the people and Chinese, Tamil, missionary and Islamic religious schools receive yearly allocations for the first time in their lives.

The Pakatan Rakyat states are run cleanly with praise from the 2008 Auditor-General Report for our budget surpluses and proper financial management with Penang even praised by Transparency International. We even cater for the future generation by leading the fight against climate change through our initiative to reduce plastic bag consumption, the first in Malaysia. There is no hate and fear only goodwill and compassion.

Truly, the people in these Pakatan Rakyat states can see, can touch and can feel that we are better off than under BN. And a Pakatan Rakyat leadership that is not out to prove that we as leaders can perform better than you, but wants to give everyone the opportunity to perform better than us. We are still learning and will get better as long as we hold fast to our principles and the lessons learnt.

We have been steadfast in pursuing reforms through upholding principles of integrity in leadership and democratic governance centered on freedom, justice, truth, people's welfare and adherence to religious values. These principles must be our guiding posts and milestones of progress and success. We can compromise on the means but never the ends. But mouthing good intentions is not enough if we can not translate these principles into action and results.

The lessons learnt is the necessity of continuously listening to the people, to show leadership by example, being humble and not fearing to admit mistakes made, the urgent need to reform the civil service to be efficient and accountable and to be Malaysian First. We want no part of the extremist fringes with pronouncements and positions that frightens off any decent Malaysian. We must occupy the electoral centre that is diverse and united, moderate and sensible, consistent and relevant to ordinary Malaysians. We must become Middle Malaysia.

Middle Malaysia prefers co-operation not conflict, consultation instead of confrontation and an inclusive shared society rather than an exclusive separate society. A shared society is one that celebrates diversity and assures everyone a place in society by guaranteeing:-

- democratic participation,
- respect for diversity and human dignity,
- offering equal opportunity; and
- protection from discrimination.

Middle Malaysia belongs to every Malaysian. Unlike UMNO Malaysia, in Middle Malaysia the content of our character is more important than the colour of our skin. Unlike BN's Malaysia, in Middle Malaysia we look at each other as brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers and as sons and daughters of Malaysia.

Unlike Crony Malaysia, Middle Malaysia respects and celebrates you with the firm belief that Malaysia's wealth, opportunities and resources belongs to all Malaysians.

When Penang put up bilingual signboards in Bahasa Malaysia as the prominent language with either Arabic, Mandarin, Tamil and English in 2008, the extremists in BN opposed it. But this was eventually accepted as reflection of our multi-racial, multi-cultural and international image we see ourselves. Malays have no problems with bilingual road signs just as a 100% Chinese area is comfortable with Arabic road signs. This is the Middle Malaysia where we protect each other because we belong to each other.

DAP restates that whilst we uphold freedom of religion, we respect Islam as the religion of the federation. That is why the Pakatan Rakyat government in Penang has almost doubled the 2010 Budget allocation for Islam to RM 24.3 million compared with the RM 12.5 million under the 2008 BN Budget. (2009 PR Budget RM 20.5 million).

DAP reiterates our condemnation and repugnance at the attacks on not just churches in Malaysia but all places of religious worship including mosques or temples. A religious matter must never be allowed to spiral out of control due to selfish political calculations. We condemn irresponsible parties for mixing religion with politics in an attempt to regain lost support amongst Malays and Muslims.

The latest suggestion by BN to resolve the crisis by restricting the word "Allah" to East Malaysia has made a mockery of Malaysia and mirrored the irresponsible political calculations. The authorities must bear full responsibility for mismanaging the controversy which has developed into a full blown crisis that has shamed Malaysia internationally.

We are not a nation at war with itself. What we are witnessing is UMNO is at war with the values that stand for openness, logical reasoning and mutual respect. When BN talks of international benchmarks, questions are raised as to why the global Islamic practice from Middle-East to Indonesia allowing Christians' usage of the word "Allah", not applicable in Malaysia. DAP does not deny the sensitivity of this issue, but resolution of this dispute is not through confrontation but consultation and not by force but by negotiations.

For this reason, DAP is proud of the principled stand taken by our allies in Pakatan Rakyat, especially PAS and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim that that Christians across Malaysia are allowed to use the term 'Allah', a universal term for God in the Middle East for adherents of the Abrahamic faiths, on condition that it is not abused to confuse Muslims. PR is consistent where BN is expedient. This is what PR's Middle Malaysia is all about, both tolerant and mutual respect as compared to BN's Extremist Malaysia that frightens everyone with intolerance and fear.

BN's Illegal Power Grab In Perak And Teoh Beng Hock's Death

Since the 15th National Congress on 23rd August 2008 and this Conference two significant events have brought blood, sweat, tears, and, hopefully, strengths at the end of the tunnel.

One, Sdr. Teoh Beng Hock's death will forever be the most sorrowful moment in DAP's history; we will seek justice for him, whatever it takes, and we will never forget Beng Hock. We have established a fund for his child and rest assured that his child will have full educational opportunities. Because of his memory, we will continue to speak up for truth and justice fearlessly even at the risk of wrongful persecution and arrest.

Two, the despicable, undemocratic and illegal power grab in Perak saddened us but also strengthened our resolve to fight for democracy and justice. DAP reiterates our stand for the dissolution of the Perak State Assembly to return power of the people to elect their Menteri Besar and EXCOs. Until then, the rightful Menteri Besar and EXCOs as well as the brave Speaker are those chosen by the people of Perak in the 2008 general elections.

In the meantime, comrades, including National Chairman, National Organising Secretary, National Publicity Secretary, Members of Parliament and State Assemblies and various national, state and branch leaders and members, have been arrested, investigated, charged and persecuted or facing such risks; we declare our unwavering support for them;

ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past year, DAP has taken the lead in many issues afflicting Malaysia, and has successfully campaigned for actions to be taken. Our Parliamentary Leader Sdr Lim Kit Siang's persistence and effort ramping up the pressure on the Government to reveal the truth on the RM12.5 billion Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) scandal since 2007 has resulted an audit report by Pricewaterhouse Coopers, an extensive Public Accounts Committee investigation and several parties charged in court for abuse of power and falsifying of accounting documents.

It has been made known by the Government that more personalities will be charged for crimes relating to the PKFZ scandal.

DAP has also launched our anti-ISA campaign which successfully pressured the government into releasing our comrades Sdr M Manoharan and Sdr V Ganabathirao, Hindraf leaders as well as other ISA detainees. We applaud their courage.

The party has been at the forefront in providing constructive proposals to resolve long outstanding national issues. In early 2009, DAP submitted a in-depth, cost-effective and viable proposal to buy-back toll concessionaires who have been making excessive profits at the expense of the rakyat after the Government declassified these concession agreements. DAP also launched its own 2010 Alternative Budget which sought to revitalise and transform Malaysia's economic foundation, and revive our economic growth and fulfill our potentials.

We believe that focusing on a knowledge-intensive and high-technology industry is the basis of a successful transformation into a high-income economy by 2020 with a per capita income of USD 15,000 from the present USD 7,000. The two key areas are economic efficiency with open tenders and a merit-needs based education system to encourage excellence, with emphasis on science and technology, so as train, retain and attract new talents.

There is a dire need to stop the brain drain to our neighbouring countries. For instance the top student in Singapore for the last two years are Malaysians. Without our best talent, Malaysia is doomed to fail while with our best talent returning home, we have a chance of success.

It is not surprising why Malaysia is stuck in a low skill, low productivity and low wage toxic mix. According to a World Bank report, only 25 percent of our labour force is engaged in skilled work. 60 percent of Malaysian families live with a monthly household income of less than RM 3,000. Skilled Malaysians are voting with their feet while we feed a huge unskilled foreign labour population.

At the same time, the national budget ballooned thrice over the last decade, operational expenditure nearly doubled in the last five years. The federal civil service increased by a third in the same period from less than 900,000 to nearly 1.3 million personnel.

Yet the rise of public spending unfortunately coincided with a visible decline of the provision of public goods and services, among which the rapid deterioration of public safety, the decline in the quality of education and healthcare, and the shocking shoddiness of public works threaten the lives of Malaysians and the future of the country.

Corruption, cronyism, collusions and outright stealing epitomised by the lost of the two fighter jet engines and many other instances are rampant and beyond rescue. The wealth of our nation, especially in the form of petroleum, has been depleted like no body's business. Privatisation has gone awry long ago and continues to haunt Malaysians.

Decades of bigotry, racism, and religious intolerance have come home to roost when Malaysia should have been the international model for multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multi-religion coexistence, tolerance, mutual respect and understanding.

The only response the government-of-the-day could provide is a series of cosmetic initiatives dubbed National Key Result Areas and Key Performance Indexes with no political will at all to ask the hard question of structural reform that takes into consideration the global shift and the yearning of vast Malaysians for a freer, more democratic and equitable society with clean government.

MUAFAKAT TRANSFORMASI MALAYSIA

In short, Malaysia is waiting for a profound change but there is a leadership vacuum. Together with our partners in Pakatan Rakyat, it is our responsibility and obligation to Malaysians of this generation and also those yet to vote and yet to be born to answer the call for leadership for real change and reform. Let us reiterate our commitment to the consolidation of Pakatan Rakyat to provide a viable alternative to Barisan Nasional and form the next Federal Government based on Pakatan Rakyat's Common Policy Framework "Muafakat Rakyat".

We must be able to bring substantive reforms to the states that we govern, quickly. Our performance, or the lack of it, in the states will either be held against us or propel us to national power. We must go beyond cosmetic change.

We must not just be the default choice of the voters merely because our traditional opponents are destroying themselves by the day in infighting. We must be the compelling attraction that the voters coalesce around.

After the jubilation of the March 2008 general elections, the Party has gotten down to work with our new coalition partners and today we have successfully forged stronger bonds with our Pakatan Rakyat partners. Our determination to prove the skeptics wrong, and that the new coalition is able to withstand any internal differences plus attacks by Barisan Nasional has culminated in the recently concluded inaugural Pakatan Rakyat Convention where the Common Policy Framework was successfully launched.

It is crucial to note that there is only one middle ground in Malaysian politics, and it is the middle ground that matters. Make no mistake that Middle Malaysia will decide which coalition will govern next.

To embrace Middle Malaysia, Pakatan Rakyat must be seen as moderate and inclusive and distance and differentiate ourselves from our exclusive, racist, extremist opponents.

The DAP stresses that true national unity can only be achieved if the nation practices the spirit of MALAYSIAN FIRST which professes common universal values of democracy, freedom, justice, integrity and human dignity and provides for equal opportunity for all, that ends divisions based

on race, religion, creed and gender, and that unites all Malaysians to face the rapidly changing world as one people. We urge all Pakatan Rakyat parties to pursue steadfastly a new *muafakat* amongst Malaysians to herald a second nation-building process.

We also express concern that Malaysian citizens in Sabah and Sarawak have been marginalized and left behind in most aspects and vow to bridge the gap between the two sides of the South China Sea and improve the wellbeing of all;

THE NEXT 18 MONTHS

The next general election is likely to happen within the next 18 months and it is also possible that state-wide elections will be called in Sarawak and Perak. The stakes are high. The results of these elections will decide the fate of our beloved nation for the next decade and the next generation.

We must, therefore, be fully prepared so that we do not squander the last opportunity for real change in Malaysia, so that we do not blame ourselves in the future, or our children do not fault us for not trying hard enough. It is hereby directed that leaders and members at all levels of the party must gear up in preparation for the next general election and the possible state-wide elections in Sarawak and Perak.

Since the last National Convention, DAP has continue to grow by leaps and bounds, with the number of members increasing by more than 50% and the number of registered branches hitting a record of 700. The party is committed to recruiting more members who firmly believe in our social democratic principles as well as those who can help us implement our vision of a competent, accountable and transparent government administration.

In order to strengthen the party's machinery, leaders and members at all levels are directed to strengthen the party's organisation at the parliamentary level so that we have stronger units to face the battles that will shape Malaysia's future.

DAP leaders, elected representatives and appointed officials in the various state authorities that Pakatan Rakyat governs must also constantly be cognizant of the party's ideology, platforms, visions and missions, as well as programmes in their quest to bring substantive change to the country

through the mandate given to them, and to be reminded to meet the high expectations of the voters.

Remember that DAP will never win alone. We nearly won all seats in Negeri Sembilan but still unable to govern. We need to win as a coalition; as a full partner in power together.

It goes without saying that we would expect our coalition partners to understand our platforms and build and expand our common grounds. More importantly, together we must constantly remind ourselves that it is the wishes of the Middle Malaysia that matters.

While we are nothing without our hardcore supporters staying with us, rain or shine, we now appeal to you to join us on this extraordinary journey of changing the federal government that requires further sacrifices, perseverance, and understanding.

We know that state governments that we are in power will be the benchmark for our ability to deliver on our promises. We will strive to fulfil high expectations so that our comrades in other states have an opportunity to win power. But the biggest objective of all is still Putrajaya.

For what we are attempting to do is nothing short of historic – to establish the first people-oriented government that places its faith in our people, truly Malaysian in spirit where Malay leaders look after Chinese, Indian leaders look after Malays, Chinese leaders look after Ibans and Iban leaders look after Kadazan and Kadazans look after Indians, that the people can learn to trust that this PR government has not only their best interests at heart but also the future generation of born and unborn grandchildren.

Speech by the DAP Secretary General & Penang Chief Minister; Member of Parliament for Bagan, Lim Guan Eng during the DAP National Conference in Ipoh on Sunday, 17th January 2010: