

PRESS STATEMENT

Malaysia: PSM Warns Of Martial Law Threat: “Mobilise Peoples’ Power to Defend Democracy!”

Monday 30 June 2008, by [DEVARAJ \(Dr\) Michael Jeyakumar](#), [PSM \(Malaysia\)](#) (Date first published: 29 June 2008).

Post March 2008 is a period of great promise. Now both fronts, the Barisan Nasional and the Pakatan Rakyat, have to compete to prove themselves to the people of Malaysia. There is no doubt that the breaking of the 2/3 majority in Parliament as well as the conquest of 5 states by the Pakatan Rakyat has propelled Malaysian politics into a new era.

However it is an era that has great risks as well. UMNO is now akin to an injured tiger. Still strong because it is still the largest single party in the country and it practically controls the levers of government at the Federal level. However it faces the hitherto unthought of possibility of losing control of the Federal Government either at the next elections or even sooner if Anwar and the PR can induce enough BN MPs to cross over.

To understand the gravity of the situation for UMNO one has to ask oneself – if the PR takes control of the Federal Government, what will the state of the BN election apparatus be after 3 years of PR rule? Will UMNO still have the human capital as well as the large money chest to conduct the next election campaign? Will UMNO members and supporters stay loyal to UMNO for 3 years if there are no more financial goodies in the form of contracts, projects and hand-outs?

Members of opposition parties are used to losing (by fair means and foul) time after again, and a much higher percentage of them will stay with their respective parties even in defeat. But that is not the case with UMNO. Money politics can buy support quickly – but that only lasts as long as the money supply does not dry up! In reality, the UMNO elite face political oblivion if they lose control of the Federal Purse as they most certainly will if they lose control of the Federal Government. (As a quick check – the Annual Budget of Selangor, the richest State Government in Malaysia, is about RM 1.4 billion, while that of the Federal Government is in excess of RM 150 billion! And this is not taking into account the massive assets held by the Federal Government through the GLCs). UMNO’s continued control of 7 State Governments will not enable it to keep all its cronies well supplied with projects and contracts!

So this brings us back to the crucial question – will that section of the Malay political and economic elite who are dependent on UMNO’s ascendancy to maintain their status and power be prepared to go quietly out of office if the PR stages a cross-over, or will they resort to unparliamentary means to re-assert control through emergency declaration, suspension of parliament and military-police rule as was done in 1969?

Some of the leaders of the PR are worried about this possibility and are hoping that the Police and the Armed Forces will remain neutral and allow parliamentary democracy to take its course – bringing down a government by a no-confidence vote is part and parcel of the parliamentary process! There is the perception among some that the Malaysian Royalty may play a pivotal role in

the position that the Military will take, which is why there is some exasperation with Karpal's critical questioning of the Royalty.

Coming back to UMNO, it is possible that a faction within UMNO will try and suspend the parliamentary process by declaring a national emergency and ruling through a military-police-UMNO cabinet, in order to beat down the strong challenge to their hegemony. To succeed in this, they will need to create a public order disturbance of sufficient proportions to be able to pass off their 'coup' as something that had to be done in the interest of the nation. In Malaysia, there is a high chance of that taking an ethnic nature. They just need the police to step aside to allow several scores of BN-linked thugs to wreak some racial violence for a few days before stepping in to declare Emergency rule.

I agree, Malaysia of 2008 is not the Malaysia of 1969. There has been significant progress in the inclusion of the Malays in the modern sector of the economy. The NEP has borne some fruit! Also Malay corporate leaders and shareholders will not like to see any political turmoil as this will affect the stock market and the economy. The majority of Malaysians abhor inter-racial violence. However a small faction intending to create the pretext for emergency rule does not need to instigate the majority of any racial group to start off inter-ethnic violence. They have sufficient thugs in their payroll to do the work for them as we saw in Batu Buruk, Batu Caves during the Hindraf demonstration of November 2007, and more recently in the Cheras toll road incident. Innocent people will be hurt in this desperate attempt by an UMNO faction to hold back the tide of change.

I agree that the above scenario is not a certainty - infact the chances of these events occurring are low. But serious actors in the political scene have to be prepared for eventualities. We must have our contingency plans. I think we (PAS, Reformasi, Makkal Sakthi, JERIT and PSM) have the resources and the support of the rakyat to dampen down and stop ethnic attacks. We need to be ready to mobilize our members and supporters such that we can send multi-ethnic peace corps comprising of men and women to communities under threat of ethnic-attacks by the thugs. These Peace Corps should mobilize the local communities concerned to organize joint patrols of the localities in question. While the Peace Corps maintain peace and order in the streets, the leaders of the PR can negotiate with the powers that be that the issue be resolved through legitimate parliamentary processes.

It was Peoples' Power that brought the Pakatan Rakyat into existence! There wasn't even a murmur regarding the Pakatan Rakyat prior to 8/3/08. The win handed to the opposition in 5 states made the Pakatan Rakyat a necessity, and moved Malaysian democracy a big step forward. Suspension of Parliament and rule under Emergency Regulations would be 3 steps backwards! The People have to defend the political gains they have brought about, and I believe that they will if we give them the necessary leadership.

Contingency plans need to be talked about and decided before the emergency situation arises. I hope the main groups mentioned above who have been using people-mobilisation as part of our political/campaign strategy will come together to provide the necessary leadership for the defence of democracy as well as to prevent the shedding of innocent blood!

Released by :

Dr. Jeyakumar

PSM Central Committee Member

P.S.

* <http://parti-sosialis.org>