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Speech by Parliamentary Opposition Leader, DAP Secretary-General and MP for Tanjong, Lim Kit Siang, at the Negri Sembilan DAP 'Blossom Flower' 30th Anniversary dinner to commemorate the 1965 Rahang by-election victory of DAP National Chairman, Dr. Chen Man Hin as an independent candidate, held in Seremban on Saturday, 18th February 1995 at 9 pm

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The Barisan Nasional exudes supreme confidence for the next general elections, with the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed planning to score the greatest Barisan Nasional victory in history and crushing the Opposition in the process.

This is why Barisan Nasional leaders are going round claiming that Malaysia does not need an Opposition.

The Barisan Nasional not only believes that it can give the DAP an even greater electoral defeat than the 1982 general elections, when the DAP was reduced to six Parliamentary seats in the Peninsular Malaysia - three in the Federal Territory, two in Penang and one in Malacca - but that it could outdo its 1974 general election results when it secured 60.7 per cent of the electoral vote, the highest in Barisan Nasional and Alliance history.

The people of Seremban will remember the 1982 general elections, where Dr. Chen Man Hin was defeated as MP for Seremban after serving three terms as MP for Seremban, creating such a euphoria among the Barisan Nasional leaders that they set out seriously to implement a 'One Language, One Culture' Policy.

In the 1982 general elections, the DAP suffered our worst electoral reverses, and there were DAP-held parliamentary constituencies which suffered a swing-around of over 20,000 votes as compared to the 1978 general elections. In these constituencies, huge DAP majorities won in the 1978 general elections were not only lost, but the Barisan Nasional candidates could win with majorities involving the DAP losing over 20,000 votes when the entire swing-around is taken into account.

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The grounds for Barisan Nasional confidence are based among other things on the following:

- * 1. the good economic conditions in the country despite the ups and downs in the stock market;
- * 2. 'Minor Liberalisation' or the more open and liberal government approaches in certain educational and economic measures in the past four years, although they do not represent basic policy changes to justify becoming 'Full Liberalisation';
- * 3. the China card, which will be a replay of the Barisan Nasional election tactics in 1974 general

elections where Chairman Mao Tse Tung was drafted by Barisan Nasional propagandists to be their main electoral draw;

* 4. the Chinese card by UMNO leaders

(a) with Anwar Ibrahim speaking in Mandarin on 'We Are One Family';

(b) with UMNO Mentris Besar and Chief Ministers led by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, wielding the Chinese brush to do Chinese calligraphy especially during the Chinese New Year;

(c) the number of Chinese films and programmes over Malaysian television channels during the Chinese New Year which is most unprecedented since the introduction of television in Malaysia in the sixties;

* 5. The PAS card with the MCA and Gerakan spreading lies and falsehoods that the DAP support PAS in its Islamic State and hukum hudud enactments;

* 6. The latest redelineation of the electoral constituencies last year;

* 7. The politics and patronage of money;

* 8. Tight control over the mass media, in particular electronic media, i.e. television.

* 9. Most important of all, the short memory of Malaysians - who are easily impressed by form and propaganda.

It is no exaggeration that the Barisan Nasional is banking considerably on the last condition- that Malaysians have a very short memory or have even lost all memory of recent events and history.

To these Malaysians who have a very short memory or no memory, Anwar speaking in Mandarin on 'We Are One Family' is adequate, although the Barisan Nasional policies have not been changed to ensure that all Malaysians are 'One Family', in particular in abolishing the division of Malaysians into bumiputeras and non-bumiputeras.

To them, UMNO leaders writing Chinese calligraphy is more important than change of National Education Policy, the abolition of Section 21(2) of the 1961 Education Act which was solemnly promised in the 1986 general elections, the fair treatment for Chinese primary schools and government funding for Chinese Independent Secondary Schools or the approval for Dong Ziao Zhong's proposed New Era College.

These people have even forgotten that only a few years ago, there were mass arrests under the Internal Security Act, the closure of newspapers, the sacking of judges undermining the principle of the independence of the judiciary, the legislating of some of the most draconian and repressive laws in the world restraining human rights and democratic liberties of Malaysians as well as the long catalogue of financial scandals in Malaysians such as the RM30 billion Bank Negara foreign exchange losses scandal.

The 1982 general elections should be a very good lesson to all Malaysians. The DAP suffered unprecedented defeat in the 1982 general elections, and the euphoria of such Barisan Nasional victory proved to even more harmful to the people, such as the "One Language, One Culture Policy" proclaimed after the 1982 general elections, the attempt to demolish Bukit China in Malacca, the long catalogue of financial scandals and corruption or the subsequent violations of human rights and democratic freedoms of Malaysians.

The next general elections is in fact one of the most important general elections since Merdeka as it would decide whether the aspirations of two generations of Malaysians since Merdeka for a more just, equal, united and democratic Malaysia could be given a solid foundation when the country is entering the 21st century.

Gerakan and MCA leaders are now fond of claiming credit for the minor liberalisations of Barisan Nasional policies, in certain economic and educational fields in the past four years.

Gerakan and MCA leaders had no concept or sympathy whatsoever for the aspirations of Malaysians for a more open and liberal Malaysia - and this was best typified by the declaration by the MCA President, Datuk Dr. Ling Liong Sik, immediately after the 1990 general elections that the Chinese in Malaysia had no reason to be asking for anything more in the country because the Chinese in Malaysia had more political, economic, educational and religious rights and freedoms than the Chinese in any other country.

The minor liberalisations of Mahathir in the past four years are the result of the pressures of the people who in the 1990 general elections created history for the DAP which in two consecutive general elections, won the support of the urban electorate - a feat which had never been achieved by any political party since Merdeka.

Mahathir read the message of the 1990 general elections correctly, that if the Barisan Nasional government continued to disregard the aspirations of the electorate for a more fair, just and equal Malaysian society, then it would stand the peril of losing all electoral support in the subsequent general elections.

It is from this realisation that the minor liberalisations of the past four years were born, not from the pressures or demands of the Gerakan and MCA leaders who had publicly blamed the voters for not voting for their candidates in the 1990 general elections, rather than blaming the Barisan Nasional nation-building policies for their forfeiting popular support.

However, the liberalisation of the Barisan Nasional nation-building policies in the past four years were minor and limited, as they do not represent major policy changes. These minor liberalisations, though welcome, are highly unsatisfactory, for without major policy changes, they are also easily reversible.

The historic opportunity of the next, general elections is whether the people can transform the 'Minor Liberalisation' of the past four years into 'Full Liberalisation' which will set the country firmly on the path towards a Malaysian Malaysia which had inspired the DAP's establishment 29 years ago.