Open invitation to young generation of Malaysians to join and reform the DAP and bring in new ideas and concepts to make the DAP a Malaysian party of the 21st century

Speech by Parliamentary Opposition Leader. DAP Secretary-General and MP for Tanjong, Lim Kit Siang, at the Kuching DAP Branch Renewal Dinner held in Kuching on Sunday, September 17, 1995 at 9 pm

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In the April general election the DAP suffered the worst electoral defeat in our 29-year party history. In Penang, where the DAP had honed to form the Penang State Government, we were virtually destroyed scraping through with one State Assembly seat.

In Sarawak, the DAP lost the Kuching Parliamentary seat which the DAP had won for three terms in the past 13 years.

The DAP MP for Kuching for three terms and Sarawak DAP State Chairman, Sim Kwang Yang, was desolated by The election result, and coupled with his personal and health problems, asked for a break from politics and stepped down from active party Leadership positions.

I can understand the sense of desolation felt by Kwang Yang at the April general election result, for I believe my sense of desolation was even greater than that felt by Kwang Yang.

In my 29-years of political struggle, which included two terms of Internal Security Act detentions spanning 35 months, arrests and persecution in court including conviction under the Official Secrets Act as well as other forms of trials and tribu¬lations, I had never felt so devastated and desolate as after the April general election results.

Finally, however, we have to ask ourselves whether what we had tried to do in our political commitment, to create a mere just, equal, free and united Malaysian society, is worth our sacrifices to lace all the political ups and downs, including the devastating result of the April general election.

The silver lining in the disastrous DAP results in the April general election was that the people as a whole were as shocked and traumatized as DAP leaders by the dismal showing of the DAP.

It was not only DAP leaders and cadres who were in a daze after the April general election results, as Malaysian as a whole were also in a daze for they knew that the voice of the DAP in Parliament was the voice of the people, and the weakening of the DAP was a weakening of the people’s voice in Parliament and Malaysian democracy generally.

This is why there was no national celebration over the landslide Barisan Nasional victory in the April general election, where the Barisan Nasional secured not only two-third parliamen¬tary majority but five-sixth majority. Instead of national ela¬tion, there was nation-wide concern and shock at the DAP’s devas¬tating defeat.

This is also why when the DAP won the Bagan parliamen¬tary by-election on September 9 with a historic and unbelievable 11,802-vote majority, which is 100 times the DAP majority only four months ago, there was nation-wide relief and joy - for everyone understood that the DAP and Malaysian democracy have been given a new lease of life.

It is a great fallacy however for anyone no think that one parliamentary by-election victory, however historic, could undo the landslide victory of the Barisan Nasional in the April general election and restore the health of DAP and Malaysian democracy.

All that the great Began parliamentary by-election victory means is that DAP and Malaysian democracy have been given a new hope and that the DAP and Malaysian democracy are not heading inexorably down the slippery slope to ruination and destruction, but that there is a new lease of life which might lead to the revival of DAP and the restoration of democracy in Malaysia.

DAP must make use of the great and historic Bagan parliamentary by-election result as a catalyst for party revival, renewal and reform. I hereby issue an open invitation to the young generation of Malaysians to join and reform the DAP and bring in new ideas and concepts to make the DAP a Malaysian party of the 21st century.

In the next three years, the priority of the party agenda will the revival and renewal of the DAP.

One of the greatest challenges of the DAP La the next three years is to talent-scout, train and develop a young gener¬ation of Malaysians, whether in Kuching Sarawak or Malaysia to take over leadership positions in the DAP.