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Of personal preferences and the place to mark the ballot paper

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MALAYSIANS go to the polls tomorrow. As usual, I will be voting for the Barisan Nasional. My wife says she will follow my example.

An election is to get the people to give a party the mandate to form a Government which can bring peace, prosperity and development.

The Barisan has done that and can do more. Forget the MSC, LRT, KLIA, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya, Petronas Twin Towers and other achievements of which I am also proud.

What I treasure more is what money cannot buy. And it is peace, harmony and stability without which there will be no prosperity and development.

Lest some of us forget, if not for the Malays, and through them Umno, we would not be where we are today.

The Japanese have to be given some credit for this.

If they had not captured our country from the British and occupied it for three-and-a-half years, we would not have known that Asians are not inferior to Europeans.

And so, when the Japanese had enough and packed it in, and the British tried to reassert themselves. Umno stirred things up a bit.

When the British were recalcitrant and tried to pull a fast one on the Sultans with some hocus-pocus about a new political order in the form of a Malayan Union, Umno became more vociferous.

To cut history short, it was Umno that achieved independence for us. And, once it was signed and sealed, as the dominant partner in a coalition, Umno heeded the views of the MCA, MIC, and the others who together made Malaysia what it is today.

Take just Asean alone and exclude Singapore because it was once er ... family and so have retained some of our characteristics. Where else are there radio and TV broadcasts not only in the national language of the country but also in Chinese and Tamil?

Where else are there Chinese and Tamil schools subsidised by the Government? In some, if not many of those countries, the schools are not allowed to be opened let alone be approved and supported by the Government

Where else can you meet a Chinese or Indian who can be identified by his name alone? In the other countries, when you look at a name, you would be justified if you were to think that the holder is a Filipino, Lao, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Thai, Myanmar national, or Indonesian. It is only when you look at the face that you will realise that he is a Chinese or Indian.

And so, where else can we prove our loyalty to our country without having to sacrifice our roots, our ethnic background?

Some Malays have grumbled about the tolerance shown by Umno, but its leaders, in their wisdom, have assuaged the jitters of these people and now they understand. They agree that it is not much good having everything to themselves if there is no harmony, prosperity and development all round them.

Who can forget the Sword of Damocles hanging over our heads in the form of some Westerners still trying to lord it over us, our country and our future?

Who can forget Gore and his gall? Who is he? He is the Vice President of the US and can repeat like a parrot a few words in Vietnamese. This made him believe that he was Al God and when he was in Malaysia, said that Malaysians who riot and set fire to the contents of dustbins were "brave

people".

Would any Malaysian, or anyone for that matter, have the arrogance to go to the US and say the things that he said? Worse, behave the way he did? Imagine going to another country and instigating the people to riot and overthrow the Government of that country!

So, you see why I am voting for the Barisan? It is the only coalition that can form a stable government and among other things, resist the shenanigans of upstarts like Gore.

It has a leader who is praised by leaders of the South and condemned by some leaders of the North, but, being condemned is not always a bad thing. It could be a back-handed compliment, a tacit admission that one cannot match the intelligence, diplomacy and statesmanship of the other.

Malaysia was once synonymous with tin and rubber. Today it is synonymous with the name Mahathir. When he became Prime Minister in 1981 he made an impact not only on us but also on people all over the world.

Among his achievements are that he has chartered the destiny of our country to the year 2020. He has prepared us for a borderless world and the IT age.

He has been so vocal in his defence of our rights and dignity, he is detested by some Westerners who have labelled him a lunatic.

He has pulled us out of the recession.

He is not aloof, nor does he closet himself in a tower. I once ran into him at a supermarket. I was about to approach him and say "hi" when a guy who looked more fierce than Godzilla materialised out of nowhere and glared at me.

Luckily or unluckily, depending on how you look at it, his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali spotted me. And when she had said "hullo" and asked me why I was not writing anymore (I was in limbo at the time) I said that it was because no one had asked me to.

When Godzilla closed in on us, I realised that discretion was the better part of trying to butter up the PM. or trying to ingratiate myself into the good books of his wife. So I said `ta-ta' to her, discreetly withdrew, and tried to look like mutton, a dead fish or anything except a potential assassin.

After having seen so many elections, retired Federal Court judge Tan Sri Harun Hashim told me that if only the Malays would beat the drum like the Indians and Chinese they would all be on par economically and there would be no need for Bumiputeras to be given special discounts, when say, buying a house.

He said that when the Malays beat the drum, they went tak untung, tak untung, tak untung, (no profit, no profit, no profit).

The Indians were more optimistic. They went kadang kadang untung, kadang kadang untung, kadang kadang untung (sometimes profit, sometimes profit, sometime profit).

The Chinese did not believe in dilly-dallying. They went untung untung chang, untung untung chang (profit profit chang, profit profit chang, profit profit chang).

In case you are not familiar with Chinese beliefs, chang is like firing crackers and it is to scare away evil spirits.

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