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Various implications of the polls

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ELECTIONS in some countries are hazardous affairs, with fights, shootings and deaths. Fortunately, in spite of contrary predictions, our 10th general election went smoothly and successfully in peace without any untoward incidents. For this we have much to be grateful for.

As expected, the Malaysian electorate gave the Barisan Nasional a clear and thumping victory, with more than two-thirds of the seats in Parliament.

This is firm support and endorsement of the policies it has carried out in the last five years, a nationalist policy aimed at defending and protecting the rights of the people and the nation and of developing the country economically and socially - in fact on all fronts.

The opposition front's dream of toppling the National Front (Barisan Nasional) was completely shattered.

Even the more moderate aim of DAP's Lim Kit Siang of denying the BN a two-thirds majority did not materialise although the Opposition gained more parliamentary seats than in the last general election.

That they should fail to achieve this was a foregone conclusion as the people were not convinced that they shared a coherent policy in spite of their hard attempts to present a facade of one.

Attempts to develop a two-party system of the European or American type fail to realise that European or American history is not the same as Malaysian history.

That is the first and most important verdict of the whole Malaysian nation regardless of racial origin.

It should not be confused with other secondary verdicts.

I want to stress this as there have been suggestions that the Malay electorate is turning against the National Front. This is an insidious propaganda that only our enemies make to divide us. We should not fall for this.

Having said that, we must also give cognizance to other side verdicts.

The first of these is that the backward and reactionary ideology of Pas is holding fast in Kelantan and has gained ground in Terengganu and is making inroads in Kedah.

This is a dangerous trend and although I do not believe that it will last long (as it thrives on ignorance, falsehood and propaganda), it is dangerous enough to warrant all patriots, especially Umno leaders, to address it fast.

They fail to do this only at the peril of the whole country, not of the Malay community alone.

As the saying goes, two wrongs do not make one right. One does not react against the perceived materialism of Umno by going against materialist development altogether.

Umno must grant that within the last two decades it has lost itself in the web of materialism.

The idealism of its early nationalist struggle has waned and has been replaced by a scramble for power, position, wealth and glory.

Ousted Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, although himself such a scrambler, opportunistically exploited this feeling of disenchantment among the youths and the middle class.

Umno leaders must address this deficiency by developing and adhering to a unified philosophy of nationalism and Islamic humanism and

internationalism. This is the only rational way ahead.

Some commentators have expressed the fear that Umno might now out-Pas Pas in this game of Islamic orientation.

One might say that that was what Pusat Islam, headed by Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, BN's Sik parliamentarian (now ironically defeated by life Pas member writer Shahnnon Ahmad of Shit fame), was trying to do.

It obviously has failed.

Has Ikim (Institute of Islamic Understanding) succeeded where Pusat Islam has failed?

There is no doubt that Ikim has brought Islamic fame to Malaysia and to Dr Mahathir as an Islamic thinker and fighter. But among the ordinary Malays, a misguided Pas "Islamic" world-view still holds sway.

The way to deal with this problem is to call the Muslims back to the humanistic and universal teachings of the Quran, which neither supports the Christian Church-derived sanctity of the theological class - the so-called ulama - nor a backward-looking world-view.

This is an extremely important matter and has to be undertaken, however difficult it may seem at first sight. Now that Dr Mahathir himself has been unreservedly hit by this class, he should have no doubt that he should accomplish this task. It must be accomplished both at the national and international levels.

The situation, both nationally and internationally, is ripe for such an undertaking.

The smaller verdict is that many have voted against Barisan Nasional, not because they like Pas, or Keadilan, or DAP, but out of protest against either the party, or the candidate, or both.

I think this is clear in the case of the Sik parliamentary constituency where the voters had to choose between two candidates. It can also be seen in the many large votes obtained by failed opposition candidates.

The third "side" verdict is the most worrying of all. It is the verdict of support for obvious deceit, slander and falsehood. This is stuff for national destruction.

In spite of clarification by Umno leaders regarding Anwar's dismissal and in spite of clear evidence that he is the darling of the neo-colonialists (who are behind him and his supporters in wanting to topple nationalist Dr Mahathir) there is still a significant number of voters who believe in these lies and falsehood.

Go back to early Islamic history during the time of Caliph Uthman and Caliph Ali and one can find disconcerting similarities between our situation now and the situation then.

Fast, firm and suitable action must be taken to rectify this.

There is not the slightest doubt that we must go back to the Malay nationalist basis of Umno's early struggles, now necessarily broadened into Malaysian nationalism, to embrace the rightful aspirations of other ethnic groups in the Malaysian nation.

To survive, a nation must be based in firm roots; its history, culture and religious traditions. The Malay community supplies these roots.

But the tree of the Malay community must ever enliven itself with fresh nutrition that other communities provide to it and with developing international culture.

Only then will it grow ever stronger. The backward-looking ideology of Pas can only bring it destruction, but Umno, more or less on the right path, must be bold and determined enough to change itself to embrace and practise a more correct philosophy of struggle, and in thus changing itself, change the developing Malaysian nation to survive and succeed in the coming century and the new millennium.

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