

BN yellow-phobia a fear of clean elections
Malaysiakini.com
July 4, 2011

Najib has been doing his road shows to attack the Bersih rally purportedly to defend Putrajaya for Umno/BN - the last being a talk to reportedly '20,000' people in Kelantan. No photo to verify the crowd size was available.

The argument put forward has been the same: Bersih is intended to help the opposition win Putrajaya. Ex-PM Mahathir is reported singing the same tune to a youth assembly, with numbers of attendees unspecified.

Looking at this argument, it is at most a projection by these politicians who are afraid of a change of power in Putrajaya. They are entitled to be afraid, in view of their bad record in government and also their extended rule of over half a century.

While they are entitled to defend their records they are however not entitled to sideline electoral reforms no matter if that may favour the opposition or not. If they stick to an unfair system just to win the elections they stand accused of the charge that Bersih throws at them.

Bersih then has a good reason to insist on the rally since their undisputable appeal for electoral reforms had not been addressed by the leading politicians up to now.

Najib and Mahathir both repeat the argument that the elections in Malaysia are fair with the excuse that the oppositions' has managed wins in the last general elections. However a win in a handicapped race does not mean the handicaps were not there.

Without the handicaps, perhaps the oppositions could have taken over Putrajaya already! If the BN did not tap into the huge reservoir of resources, personnel, cash, vehicles, buildings etc of the government, it is doubtful if the coalition led by them could defend their position at all.

Fair elections do not equate opposition win

Similarly if the ruling parties were disallowed to abuse government resources they truly will collapse as predicted. So the reason for them to try their best to focus on the opposition's interests on the rally is simply that BN cannot afford to fight clean!

As far as the citizens and civil society are concerned, we don't need to bother who may win or lose an election. Just stick to the campaign for free and fair elections and let the people choose. If the free and fair elections favour the opposition parties (and this may not necessarily be the eventuality) so be it. Who is the BN to deny us free and fair elections just because they are scared that BN will lose because of it?

Civil society does not owe the BN anything to help it win any elections, especially in view of the abuses of power used by the BN to harass and persecute civil society all these years. In theory there is no reason why free and fair elections must favour any party - only those who are afraid to lose want to distract public attention from the basic demand from the people/voters that elections must be free and fair as required by the constitution and international norms.

It is as clear as daylight that many things that the ruling parties are doing to win elections are banned or illegal in our regional neighbours, for example:

- * Abusing government resources and programs to campaign for their party/candidates,
- * Buying votes with private or public resources
- * Restrict the right to campaign by the opposition parties

* Appoint a non-independent Election Commission from incompetent and BN-biased civil servants

* Keep away a big chunk of postal voters from the access by opposition parties and deploy them to win strategic constituencies.

All these would be gone should BN lose its hold on Putrajaya. All these changes will definitely favour the opposition parties' chances, no doubt about it. But they deserve such a level playing field as these things apply to elections all over the world!

Playing dirty is archaic

The party which insists on handicaps to themselves are out-dated and out-argued by its critics. Now it is trying all its best to demonise the civil society groups that call for long overdue electoral reforms.

BN should feel ashamed of itself for trying to hold on to such handicaps in order to continue to enjoy power in Putrajaya. Even before it has lost the votes of the rakyat, it had already lost legitimacy to run the government if it cannot even allow civil society to rally for free and fair elections, let alone actually implement it.

The last argument put forward by the ruling parties is that the Bersih rally will call attention from 'outside powers' to interfere into the country. Certainly there must be a cause or else the international community won't waste their time here.

BN parties are self conscious that should Bersih succeed in putting up a case for free and fair elections to the international community, the sanctions from the international community will be a huge embarrassment and pressure on the coalition.

How would BN face, for example Thailand where our EC was invited to observe the general election there. The Thai EC had the power to throw out hundreds of fraudulent wins by candidates, dissolve a few parties and even dethrone a couple of fraudulent governments. The Malaysian EC will find it very difficult to put up a case that the ruling parties are entitled to tap into government resources or monopolise the people-funded media, just to name a couple of habits from the BN.

To avoid the international community from interfering, the best way is to correct our moribund election system and not outlaw electoral reform groups, not to arrests citizens who advocate positive changes to the electoral systems, not to demonise a rally that should be a fundamental right of the citizens.

DPM Muhyiddin Yassin's attempt to raise xenophobia is actually working against the improvement of the country; he must not get away without being challenged by all fair-minded citizens!