

GE-13: BN wins landslide victory
Malaysiakini.com
August 22, 2011

Only an optimist would believe that their vote would sweep Umno from power in GE-13. Why bother with a sham election and waste resources going through the motions of an election, where the outcome has already been decided in advance? The headlines will proudly boast: "BN wins. Najib scores a landslide victory, in a massive 103 percent turnout".

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak wants GE-13 before electoral reforms. In a functioning democracy, the rakyat has a choice. The fundamental difference is that we are denied that choice.

We distrust our electoral processes despite Najib's assurance about the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reforms. Will Umno/BN leave office gracefully?

At the 61st Umno general assembly Najib declared: "Even if our bodies are crushed and our lives lost, brothers and sisters, whatever happens, we must defend Putrajaya".

At the World Youth day meet in Putrajaya, Najib screamed, "Will you defend Putrajaya with me?" before breaking into a disturbing tirade: "Defend Putrajaya! Defend Putrajaya! Defend Putrajaya!"

By 2011, the People's Volunteer Corps (Rela) would consist of 2.6 million members. Will they be issued postal votes too?

Some people believe that certain western democracies are far superior, with honest and principled people in government.

Not true! Politicians in foreign establishments can be just as devious and as corrupt as the Malaysian ones. Their government appears to be working only because their rakyat makes sure the politicians serve them and not the other way around. They are not afraid of criticising their MPs. Politicians who do not adhere to the minimum parliamentary standards, are booted out.

In these countries, elected representatives are monitored, pursued and made accountable for their actions. Politicians are important in that they enact laws in parliament, on our behalf. But politicians need to be regulated. They are the tools with which the state can meddle in our lives.

MPs are to be controlled

MPs are to be controlled, not controlling. It is by us being watchful, and not sycophantic, that keeps MPs in check.

Malaysians have seen a constant barrage of electoral fraud. Last week, former soldiers alleged that they were ordered by their superiors to manipulate votes. But the denunciation by the Chief of the Armed Forces, General Zulkifeli Mohd Zin, who labelled these ex-soldiers as traitors, is itself an act of treachery.

Illegal workers being granted citizenship and voting rights have been unearthed. MyKads of dubious authenticity are distributed to foreigners. Political expediency seems more important than sovereignty. It appears that the NRD is a major threat to national security.

Scores of centenarians, or people who have long since died, have been resurrected, to cast their votes. These accompany the usual complaints of vote-buying, intimidation and promises of aid in exchange for votes.

Gerrymandering, or the division of geographical areas into constituencies which will unfairly benefit only one party, is overlooked by the EC. Pro-opposition areas may have one MP representing over 100,000 voters in the one constituency whereas in BN strongholds, constituencies consist of around 5,000 people.

Just before Bersih's 9 July march, Wan Ahmad Wan Omar (left), the EC's deputy chairman, complained that NGOs were obsessed with the comparison of election practices between Malaysia and other countries.

He said, "Elections observers must be domestic observers. Foreign observers, they don't know our election laws, they don't understand. It's a different value system."

Yet he failed to act after Ambiga Sreenevasan and other local election activists were banned from monitoring the Sarawak state elections.

Wan Ahmad claimed that our election laws were "fair and impartial" and was stung by the "negative" comments of foreign observers.

He said, "They are foreigners, who are they? Why do we need foreigners, Germans commenting on our election system?"

He is right. The culture of "You help me, I help you" is "Umno-esque" and peculiar to Malaysia. Malaysia is 'superior' and has nothing to learn from others. Wan Ahmad's arrogance smacks of "Ketuanan Melayu" and extols the virtues of the warped BTN indoctrination.

So what exactly is the EC's role when it continually coughs up excuse after lame excuse of why it cannot ensure clean elections?

EC but a toothless dragon

The EC is but a toothless dragon whose only job seems to be the defence of BN. It turns a blind eye when Umno/BN uses government resources, the national media and other instruments of the state, for its own propaganda.

The poor appear to be supportive of Umno and in past elections, people living in decrepit hovels have posters of Umno, Najib or Taib Mahmud (for Sarawak) adorning their homes.

In Sarawak, the villagers idolise Taib, like teenagers would their pop-idol, when Taib makes his grand entrance, by helicopter, at longhouses. Usually, his Mercedes is on standby in case Taib fancies the trek home by car.

The contrast between the villagers' pitiful surroundings with basic infrastructure, and Taib's opulence, makes it hard to imagine how they have benefitted from Taib's long rule. What do they hope to gain by supporting him for another term?

It is the same story in peninsular Malaysia. The rural people and the poor appear to support Umno/BN. Perhaps they are comfortable with the devil you know than the one you don't. Perhaps the opposition has yet to gain the confidence of the rural folk.

Have the destitute given up hope of change; they are prepared to accept the few tokens of appreciation like sacks of rice, Milo and sugar, in exchange for votes? Does "stability" triumph over "change"?

Bersih cannot do it alone because Umno/BN dominates Malaysian politics. Any attempt by the opposition to "oppose" in Parliament means they are not allowed to table their motions or at worst, they risk being suspended.

With enormous cash reserves, and the ability to utilise government resources, unlike the opposition, Umno/BN can command political patronage amongst businesses. In an election, favours are called in and Umno/BN do act like they are above the law.

Too arrogant to acknowledge the voters

'Najib & co' are too arrogant to acknowledge the voters: What is the rakyat saying? What do they want? Can they cast their vote and be sure that the policies and the person they voted for, will be reflected in the final outcome?

Fraud, manipulation, phantom votes and money politics are useful instruments which have helped to prop up Umno, for 54 years.

Umno has been rattled by Bersih and the popular uprising in Egypt has given Malaysians hope. The rakyat is finally getting to have a real taste of democracy but the challenges are enormous as we try and adapt to being "free" and "fair".

The trick to improving Malaysian politics is not to allow the political parties and their leaders any let-up but to be constantly critical of their performance. Let's have less praise and more scrutiny.

GE-13 should not be held until electoral reforms are under way. Don't be fooled by Najib's latest spin on democracy and his smokescreen about the PSC and electoral reform.

MARIAM MOKHTAR is a non-conformist traditionalist from Perak, a bucket chemist and an armchair eco-warrior. In 'real-speak', this translates into that she comes from Ipoh, values change but respects culture, is a petroleum chemist and also an environmental pollution-control scientist.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/173771>