

Najib vs Anwar: The sincere one wins
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COMMENT The current prime minister has many things to give to the people, including cash, for them to vote for the BN.

But the truth is, are these measures taken out of concern for the welfare of the rakyat or just to win an election?

The ruling coalition has failed to show so far that they are sincere at a time when the rakyat just want an honest government.

They want straight answers and they want leaders who are not only sincere, but also competent and fairly knowledgeable, just like them.

Watching BN ministers deal with issues the country faces is too often a disappointing, even sad experience, for they rarely show any sincerity in their answers.

NONThe cash handout of RM500 given just before an election is an attempt to buy votes, and not a sincere attempt to prop up the economy by increasing consumption. So are the other benefits announced recently.

Buying votes are par for the course in our country; thanks to certain "election judges" who would never think of giving an election petition for bribery the time of day, if it means the BN candidate would be affected.

When I questioned the purchase of Second Generation Patrol Vessels or SGPVs for the Navy, a deal that will cost us at least RM10 billion, all we got from Defence Minister Zahid Hamidi was a flippant reply.

He said that the amount was already in the budget, which meant there was nothing wrong with the purchase.

If that is considered a good enough an answer, then Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil can also put forward the same argument to explain her current imbroglio.

Having a budget allocation is one thing, but buying something at such a ridiculous price without proper evaluation is another.

His invitation for me to discuss the matter with him was just a publicity stunt, for if he had been sincere he would have issued a letter stating the time and place we should meet.

Keeping with the times

Watching the debate between PAS vice-president Husam Musa and Minister in the PM's Department Nazri Aziz has also been revealing, and is another example of how BN ministers find it difficult to give straight answers.

When asked why indelible ink was not used in the 2008 general election, Nazri said the attorney-general would not allow it and there was no fatwa on the matter then from the National Fatwa Council (which was not true).

Four years later, the same AG said indelible ink was, in fact, legal and the Fatwa Council also decreed its

use to be permissible.

An honest answer would have been that Umno was not prepared to use the ink.

An honest answer would have been that pressure from Bersih 2.0 and the international community forced the BN to decide on using the ink.

People appreciate honesty under any circumstances.

On the question of free and fair elections, Nazri had said the opposition's victory in five states was proof that the elections was exactly that: free and fair.

That's what deposed Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak also said to Egypt's opposition when he won 90 percent of the votes.

An honest answer here would have been yes, there are aspects of unfairness that we need rectify. Members of the army and the police should get to meet opposition candidates.

Adequate TV, radio and newspaper coverage should be given to opposition candidates.

Their representatives should be present during polling in the army camps.

And we will ensure senior commandants will not pressure the lower ranks to vote for the BN. These would have all been honest answers.

Presidential-style GE

The opposition has some very capable leaders. Husam Musa, for example, has an acute mind and a proven administrator.

Anwar has to show the people the key policymakers of his government. No more fudging on his line-up.

NONEThis election is about Najib vs Anwar.

It's almost presidential in style. It's a head on combat, but the people also want to know who is more capable and more sincere.

Najib has done well for himself but his party is still mired in the past. Najib will not reshuffle his cabinet because he can't; but Anwar can show his line-up.

It's not difficult to parade better cabinet members than the present one.

Najib will not be able to get BN ministers and excos to declare their assets to the public but Anwar should get all the Pakatan states to follow Penang and declare theirs.

Najib will not be able make Petronas more transparent or accountable, but Anwar can.

Najib may amend Section 15 of UUCA to give students a role in politics but he won't give academic freedom, but Anwar can. BN will not make discrimination illegal, but Pakatan can.

Pakatan has to be bold. Give the people clear choices. Give the people honest and capable leaders. Make this election a historic one. There is no second chance.