

BN trump card: 'First past the post' guarantee
MalaysiaKini.com
April 21, 2012
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COMMENT Malaysia practises democracy. Its elections are conducted in a manner popularly known as 'first past the post', meaning that the polls are won by a candidate with the most votes.

The winning candidate does not necessarily need to receive an absolute majority of all votes cast.

BN is one of the world's longest uninterruptedly elected coalition of political parties ruling a country. Its rule over Malaysia is now entering the sixth decade.

NONEThe opposition parties and its leaders have long complained that BN has been practising unfair and illegal methods in most of the polls, to assure victory and consolidate their power.

However, it is only after 2008 that more light is being shed on the crooked ways that BN appears to be employing to win at all costs in the looming elections.

In more ways than one, the distance in the race to the post for a BN victory appears to be getting shorter by the day at the expense of the opposition.

From the expert analysis of many political scientists such as Wong Chin Huat and Ong Kian Ming as well as electoral reform coalition Bersih and civil society action group TindakMalaysia, a clearer picture is beginning to unveil - the GE13 is going to go down in the nation's history as the dirtiest elections ever.

Public funds origin ignored

The usual dirty tactics as always remain. BN being the ruling government is accused of controlling the mainstream media like the national television and radio broadcasts as well as the newspapers.

NONEClaims of federal money being utilised to fund their political campaigns, government machinery and facilities being abused, civil servants being bullied to assist are serial complaints from the opposition.

What is even more alarming is the revelation of the elaborate methods being employed to dilute the power of the legitimate voters in this country.

First, is the outright rigging methods which include vote buying, ballot stuffing and counting/tabulation frauds.

Second, is the rigging through the electoral roll. This is done by three methods:

- * Inclusion of non-voters - the phantom voters. This includes dead people voting, non-resident, non-existent voters (cloning) and foreigners being given citizenship/MyKads;

- * Exclusion of legitimate voters omitted directly from the electoral roll;

- * Redelineation of constituencies - by altering the size and boundary of the electorate, one can affect the power of the ballot. Recently the EC had been doing this under the 'border correction exercise' term.

The count of registered voters who number more than 50, sharing a same address is 1,262.

The number of new voters who have been 'registering' since BN lost its two-thirds majority in the last GE is nothing short but spectacular.

As of Dec 31, 2011, 12,595,268 Malaysians have registered as qualified voters.

This sudden feverish spurt of 'voter enlightenment' appears to show Selangor as its epicentre.

Selangor registered 340,000 new voters since the last GE, which is a 21.8% rise compared with the national average of 16.3% in voter registration.

Ong Kian Ming highlights that history appears to be repeating itself as the two states Sabah (after the 1990 elections) and Terengganu (after the 1999 polls) saw a sudden jump in the number of voters in the electoral roll after the BN loss.

Subsequently in the following GEs, miraculously the BN returned to power in spectacular fashion.

In 2011, the National Institute for Democracy and Electoral Integrity (NIEI), Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) and Merdeka Centre conducted a national voter registration audit.

The main purpose was to assess the accuracy and completeness of the electoral rolls.

A total of 1,177 ordinary voters were randomly sampled from 60 parliamentary constituencies.

The key findings indicated that 8% of these voters live at invalid addresses.

About 26% of these voters are unrecognisable voters, meaning they could not be recognised by a neighbour or local resident.

In short, these voters' identities may not be valid. Only 31% of them were living in their stated addresses.

Playing pucks with EC roll

The high number of non-resident voters is a major concern and poses an unhealthy practice of democracy as per our 'first past the post' system that is especially designed to provide for actual residents to elect their representatives in accordance with the local needs as per the knowledge and issues faced by the local residents.

Malaysian Electoral Roll Analysis Project (Merap) detected around 100,000 problematic names based on 10 issues.

Ong Kian Ming states if this number is added with other previously highlighted issues, it would be easily mount to over 400,000 dubious voters and that, too, is only the tip of the iceberg.

There are also a further 42,051 voters on the electoral roll whose IC numbers could not be detected in the National Registration Department (NRD) database.

Nonetheless, Election Commission (EC) chief Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof (far right) finds this trivial as it only amounts to 0.3% of the master electoral roll of 12.6 million voters.

It is a wonder if the EC chief could find anyone who is 0.3% pregnant in this world. One can either be pregnant or not and in this case the electoral roll must be viewed as "dirty" and nothing less.

Another mind-boggling issue is that in the voter registration audit report, it is clearly stated that the EC had given the total number of registered voters as of March 31, 2011 as 12,032,467. How is that so?

Bersih had also unearthed more instances of fraud in the latest electoral roll.

It appears that there are 24,105 voters in Sabah and Sarawak who have been allegedly re-registered in Selangor.

Its steering committee claimed that 15,520 Sabah and 8,585 Sarawak voters had been registered twice in Selangor in the latest updated electoral roll until first quarter of 2012.

Backdoor postal voters

Another alarming development that is brewing is the BN government appears to be rushing to pass the Rela Act in Parliament.

The first reading has been submitted and among the subjects one states 'allowing Rela members to assist any security force or authority established under written law upon the latter's request'.

rela members 241204Some are wondering if this is a backdoor method to eventually register the over two million strong Rela members or even a part of them as postal voters.

After all, there is a provision in postal voter regulation 3(f) which empowers the EC to designate any group as postal voter through the gazette.

Looking at all these issues from a macro point of view, it appears that the BN is very determined to win the 13th GE and is willing to go to whatever extent to do so.

Pakatan Rakyat's chances of coming to power are looking slimmer even though the crowds that are turning up at their ceramah are swelling.

In a free and fair elections, it is my personal opinion that Pakatan will win hands down, but in a polls that one has 'first past the BN's post' rule, Pakatan would require a perfect storm of the unity and support of all races in Malaysia to do so.

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