

**Bersih vs Basi**  
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**By Dean Johns**

For some time now I've been proposing that rather than a national front or Barisan Nasional, Malaysia's ruling coalition is so stale, rotten and out of date as to be a national affront better known as Basiran Nasional.

And nothing would support this premise more powerfully than BN's response - or rather lack of response - to calls by Bersih for clean and fair elections.

A parliamentary select committee set up ostensibly to consider reforms predictably delivered absolutely nothing of any substance.

election commission chief abdul aziz yusof More glaring irregularities in the electoral roll are revealed almost daily, and yet Basiran Nasional's tame Election Commission chief Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof (left) has had the arrogance to declare it "the cleanest in the world."

Identity cards are allegedly being given - or more likely sold - to foreigners prepared to promise to vote for Basiran Nasional.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak still hasn't called a general election, yet he's out there telling his customary lies and distributing his usual bribes to the voters as if such pre-campaigning was legal.

Basiran Nasional flags have gone up on KTM stations in similar contravention of electoral regulations.

And most recently, BN rushed through Parliament a series of amendments to the Election Offences Act 1954, placing election monitoring under the Election Commission's discretion, effectively barring candidates and their representatives from checking voters' identities or effectively overseeing vote-counting, and enabling the anonymous publication of defamatory election material.

Meanwhile, as if all this wasn't dirty enough, Basiran Nasional and its stooges have been working as hard as ever to blacken the name of Bersih leader Ambiga Sreenevasan.

Rampant religious and racial bigotry

Seizing on her involvement in fighting for the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transexuals, Basiran Nasional front organisations recently staged a rally at the University Putra (Putrid?) Malaysia campus to hit Ambiga and other regime hate targets like Anwar Ibrahim with the full force of their rampant religious and racial bigotry.

NONE Gabungan NGO Malaysia's Radzi Daud kicked-off proceedings by branding lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals as "insane", and people who have "had their souls taken by Satan".

Alam Warisan president Azam Mokhtar upped the ante by accusing advocates of LGBT rights of "trying to set fire to Malaysia" in a speech climaxing in the declaration that "today I withhold this keris. But if one day I can't tolerate any more, I will use the keris against the enemy of this land".

No response on my part to such rubbish could possibly equal the scathing ripostes it inspired from Raja Petra Kamarudin in his Malaysia Today piece, "Prostituting Islam", and from Mariam Mokhtar in her Malaysiakini column "Moderate Malays must speak out".

In his trademark shock-treatment style, Raja Petra wrote, in part, that "demonstrating against free sex and

LGBTs is not going to strengthen a Muslim's aqidah. They need to demonstrate against discrimination, unfairness, injustice, racism, corruption, abuse of power, fraud and whatnot. Those are the things that destroy a Muslim's aqidah."

And just as powerfully, Mariam Mokhtar called on honest, upstanding and genuinely God-fearing Muslims to voice their disapproval of hypocrites hell-bent on hijacking their faith.

"Umnoputras enjoy billions in kickbacks. Naked greed triumphs over politics and religion. The moderates should not wait till the kitty runs dry, and everyone is scraping the bottom of the barrel, before sticking their heads above the parapet."

There's not much I can add to this salutary message, save to make the point that it's not just Malays and other Muslims who have to stand up and speak out, but the so-called 'silent majority' of Malaysians of all races, religions and political persuasions.

There's nothing exclusively Malay, Muslim or even Malaysian about a ruling regime's faking piety for the purpose of concealing criminality, or, in other words, pretending to pray to some supreme being, while knowing it is better to prey on the populace.

Nor is it a recent phenomenon, having been practised for millennia before Karl Marx proclaimed in his Communist manifesto that "religion is the opiate of the people".

And neither is it always religion that regimes cynically employ to repress and rob their people, as pathetically evident in personality cults like that of 'Eternal Leader' Kim Il-Sung in totalitarian North Korea.

In Malaysia, of course, despite such sanctimonious ploys as Najib Abdul Razak's swearing on the Quran of his innocence of involvement in the Scorpene submarines scandal or the Altantuya Shaariibuu killing, and much-publicised trips to Mecca by all the usual suspects, the real gods of the Basiran Nasional regime are money and power.

And the supporters and beneficiaries of this idol-worship will resort to any length to defend it. Hence Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's recent rant that opposition parties "have brought a new ideology by questioning many things that we have accepted all this while, questioning a major part of the provisions contained in the federal constitution by stating that the BN is not fair to all races in the country. These are all slanders. That's why I want to call on you to oppose them, as they want to destroy the country".

NONETHis barely-coherent exercise in confusion was echoed by Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein in a series of bizarre twists and turns in his attitudes to public protest.

He denied that thuggish attacks on students camped at Dataran Merdeka had actually happened, commenting that "there have been such cases where allegations of such nature have been used... to raise emotions, be it in the area of race, religion and now involving students."

But in an attempt to appear less harsh than usual, Hishammuddin last week claimed that Saturday's Bersih sit-in at Dataran Merdeka was not a security threat, as it had "little traction" with the people.

Days later, he went even further in portraying himself as a convert to liberality, conceding that the government had "overreacted" to Bersih 2.0 by declaring the movement illegal and arresting people wearing yellow T-shirts.

But now it turns out that 'good cop' Hishammuddin has handed the 'bad cop' role to his very own bad cops, with Dang Wangi district police chief Mohamad Zulkamain Abdul Rahman writing a letter to Bersih organisers disallowing the proposed sit-in 'for reasons of safety'.

For the safety of Basiran Nasional, no doubt. But as the regime very well knows, and will see

demonstrated across Malaysia and around the world on Saturday , it will never again be safe from Bersih's call for clean and fair elections, and the Malaysian people's demand for a clean and honest government.

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