

Lessons BN unwilling to learn

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The Bersih 3.0 rally may be over but its effects on the people continue to reverberate among the people till today and I am sure it will do so for weeks and months to come.

Although by and large it was a peaceful assembly, at its final moments it became violent which was indeed unfortunate and ugly.

Many reasons were given for the rally to become ugly, with each party pointing a finger at the other.

The facts and images of the cause of the violence are there for everyone to see but it needs a matured mind to see them in an unbiased way.

Unfortunately there are not many with such unbiased minds today among politicians in particular those from the ruling party who continue to be in a state of denial.

There are calls for an independent inquiry to get to the cause of the violence but most Malaysians with unbiased minds don't see the need for that as the evidence is there clearly for all to see who the real culprits were.

Furthermore experience as shown we can never have a truly independent panel in Malaysia.

Even the Election Commission which is supposed to be apolitical, is headed by members of the ruling party, severely undermining its neutrality although the EC chairman ridiculously claims he will be impartial.

The recent panel set up by the government, headed by the former IGP Hanif Omar to look into the violence at the Bersih rally clearly shows the fears the government has for a truly independent inquiry.

How can Hanif, having condemned the Bersih rally as being communist, be impartial as the chairman of the panel? Moreover being a former police chief how can he investigate police brutality?

If the government is sincere in wanting to find the real culprits behind the violence it must accept Suhakam or the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue, who offered to conduct an independent investigation into the Bersih 3.0 rally on April 28.

However as expected the government refused to accept either of them. Can a former IGP can be more neutral than an official representative from the UN, the most respected world body?

The major issue of the Bersih 3.0 is the demand for clean and fair election.

In spending so much time and energy into finding out who is the cause of the violence, which many believe was provoked, the government is misdirecting its attention away from the main issue at hand.

It was not a few hundred people taking to the streets but more than 100,000, some say as much as 300,000, ordinary people from all races and all walks of life.

The large turnout on the day is the most significant sign that the BN government seemed to have missed. For every one who turned up, there could be at least a hundred who couldn't.

The other important fact was that this time around there were more highly qualified people who freely chose to take to the streets hand in hand with the common man and youths.

There were many professionals, lecturers, professors and other respected people and the many dedicated people from the various NGOs besides the politicians.

They were not people ignorant on what is going on in the country but people who know what they were asking of their government.

They were not asking for something extraordinary but something very basic as citizens and provided for in the constitution with which they were well versed; a clean, fair and free elections to choose a government for the next five years. Is that wrong?

By confronting them with water cannons and tear gas and even arresting and manhandling them the authorities have done a great disservice to the ruling party.

What they have done is pitting the government against the people, failing to realise that in any battle between the people and the government, the former will always be the final winner.

History has shown that no government, however powerful, that takes arms against its own citizens has survived for long.

Instead of studying the calls of the protesters, the government and the EC are mocking and ridiculing the people for demanding for electoral reforms.

They are threatening the people with all sorts of underhand tactics. Who were the petty traders who staged a burger protest in front the home of Bersih co-chairman Ambiga Sreenevasan?

Who were the people who protested with a mock funeral service for Penang chief minister at the gates of his residence?

Why did the police not intervene to stop these illegal and un-Malaysian practices of intimidating respected national leaders? Who are these people with special immunity?

The solution is easy for the government. Be on the side of the people, listen and address their grousers fairly and it will win their hearts.

It should engage and not confront Bersih which represents millions of ordinary non-political citizens who will be voters in the coming 13th general election.

By ignoring the voices of the people the government has seriously cast doubts in the minds of the people on its willingness to reform which it has promised.

Why the reluctance to bring electoral reforms?

By adopting a confrontational stance and going against the very people they are elected to serve, they have indeed lost more support from the people who were still undecided on who to vote.

For the people the solution is also easy. They have sent Bersih to negotiate with the government for clean elections which it has not only turned but treated its leaders and participants like criminals, even calling them communists trying to topple the government.

If the government continues to ignore them the people will resort to the power of their votes to bring in the party that will be sympathetic to their demands.

The BN must come to its senses that at present the sentiment among the people at large is for change and this feeling is spreading fast with each progressive day as it continue to make more and more mistakes.

The increasing anti-BN sentiment is not because of Bersih, Anwar Ibrahim or Pakatan Rakyat but solely due to its own folly and being in a state of denial, underestimating the maturity and wisdom of the voters.

Political change is inevitable as that is what the people going to do come the 13th general election.