

Rhetoric and substitutable capital in political change
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Today, the MCA president again made a "proud" admittance in public of his extramarital affair in 2008:

"Will Lim Guan Eng have the courage like me to admit fault, apologise and resign from my ministerial post as well as all my positions in the party?" asked Chua.

Soon after this came the announcement that the Lim-Chua debate would not be aired live. They went out of topic the last round; what would they be debating this time around?

More rhetoric? More accusations? More promises?

Concern was voiced over ethics in journalism. The senior editor of a daily today declared that the language used in reporting political activities was too "explosive" to be believed.

Although readers were cautioned to carefully assess what were posted in on-line portals, one question remained unanswered, who were the mercenaries who went online launching attacks on practically everything written in favour of the BN.

Blinded attacks of this kind would cause how many voters to go to the polls with a confused mind?

On the other hand, have all the opposition promises of 2008 been fulfilled? An NGO announced it was preparing the report cards of MPs. Is it ready yet? Preparing a check list was never on my mind. Below are mere samplings.

Development

After 4 years and 4 months since March 2008, had they delivered on their promises?

Yes, promises, as the opposition had no track record to form the content of their battle cries in 2008. Gerakan, the only opposition Tanjung Bungah George Town view 02party which toppled BN in Penang in 1969, joined BN in 1973.

Gerakan won subsequent general elections (1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2004) under the BN umbrella. Thus development of Penang cannot be credited to the current party in office.

Basic amenities

In Shah Alam, street lights in one taman malfunctioned for much longer periods of time than before March 2008. Rumours of sabotage by pro-BN government servants soon fizzled out.

At the height of complaints, residents offered to purchase bulbs for the lamps and merely requesting for the services of the skylifts and technicians to replace them.

An up market residential housing estate became a dimly lit environment, potholes

everywhere, maggots crawling out from the rubbish chambers of bungalows fronts; traffic lights remained out of operation for weeks, and rubbish heaped up in car parks, not to mention termite infested trees by the roadside which snapped in heavy down pours.

How much would it have cost to rectify such basic amenities? Not as much as the RM1million "token salary" for the state economic adviser?

When the Selangor government announced it would sell assets to fund free education, were the people consulted? Each time I visited my dentist, I frowned at the two parking lots with the signboards announcing, "Reserved for XXX Ahli".

It would have been more caring if these parking lots were reserved for senior citizens who still paid parking fees as compared to those unknown faces who do not.

Planned disorder

Corruption was the No. 1 reason for voting out BN in 2008. It boggled my mind to hear the owner of a new shop, merely days old, complaining of being "invited" to join "1Malaysia security programme".

More absurd was the perception that law enforcement and arresting corruption were strictly BN responsibility and had nothing to do with the state government.

Isn't it obvious that these new executives at the state level just could not integrate with Federal offices? Even the Penang Chief Minister called on the Federal government to spend more in fighting crime.

What was the recent scuffle near him compared with the threat to public order during Bersih 3 in Kuala Lumpur?

What basis was the justification of "impossible to control the participants of a sit-in peaceful demonstration" , when less than a month later an NGO group demonstrated with meticulous planning and high level of cultured discipline, 5,000 religious devotees, one-by-one walked up an altar to bathe the small statue of a religious deity? This event was also held in Kuala Lumpur.

Long-Term Development

When faced with state debt, the chief minister proposed to the federal government to convert a RM600 million loan into a grant.

Elsewhere, too, recorded outstanding debts amounting to RM1bil or more. Are such commitments not contributory to rising federal debt of this country?

I remember seeing the Shah Alam 2020 draft plan just before the 2008 general elections.

Committees were set up to examine the consultants' proposals. Now, another draft plan had been crafted afresh. Queries came to my mind : which was the consulting firm this time and how much fees were paid out to the new company?

Catchy headlines claimed that changes in land use were needed to accommodate the MRT project; rubber trees would be cut down to give way to residential buildings, and among other changes, some 50 acres of land classified for residential use would be converted into a

private cemetery.

Strangely. in a fast developing urban area, living souls were willing to give up landed resources for the dead.

Substitutable capital

Where is the political will that MCA would continue with the party transformation started by previous party presidents? What had been done to avoid another shameless out-burst as above?

It did not do any good to a member, when the opposition party leader declared he was not like the MCA president using descriptions which left no room for imagination?

How much longer must MCA members, women members in particular, live with this kind of insult? Worse, this was brought upon the members by their own leaders - those delegates to the general assembly who approved this shameful situation to persist.

I have asked this question more than a hundred times: "In the multitude of close of a million members, is there no better candidate to fill the presidency position of MCA?"

During lunch yesterday, I casually asked someone how long had he been a central delegate in MCA? He answered, "since so-and-so was president".

Mental maths told me that his tenure had been more than 10 years. He was there by virtue of the position he held in the division - to imply that his tenure would continue unless he stepped down from the divisional position.

This sent me to ponder how human capital had been assessed and applied.

Adam Smith in his book, "Wealth of Nations" published in 1776, cautioned country leaders that four types of capital formed a nation's wealth, viz. manufactured capital, human capital, natural capital and social capital.

In 2010, the United Nations proclaimed that the "real wealth of a nation" was none other than human capital: the people's education, skills, productive potential, health and well-being, to mention a few attributes.

It is not difficult to comprehend such a change. Human capital was instrumental to the changes to the other three types of capital in Adam Smith's theory.

bill gates and steve jobsBill Gates (left in photo), before stepping down from his executive position, revealed Microsoft's secret of success was how fast the company could convert new knowledge into new products and how fast these new products could reach the market.

How should such development be viewed in the face of political change?

The Malaysian economy had been, is and will be, private sector led for many years to come. Political stability had always been prioritized by businesses in evaluating investment potential of a country.

With party chiefs comparing one another on degrees of morality rather than developing new investment initiatives, what types of investment is this country trying to attract?

Engagement

A kopitiam conversation centered on someone's heroic deed of revealing how much was squandered on a mega project.

A quiet listener asked, "How does that benefit me?" Answering this W.I.I.F.M. question may bring a politician closer to understanding what voters really want.

In the 2008 general elections, a voter's silent protest was reflected in the number of spoilt votes each candidate received.

In the case of the 15 MCA parliamentary winners, most had between 1% to 2%. 3 MPs had above 4% with one outstanding at 8%. Are these not telling signs that they should not be nominated for GE13?

If rhetoric and perception are insufficient to improve voters' trust, try engagement.

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