

## **Debating the 'best democracy'?**

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**By Rom Nain**

At the rate things are degenerating, many Malaysians are probably feeling that the sooner the darn elections, both state and federal, are over and done with, the better it'd be for our collective sanity.

And the better, indeed, it'd (hopefully) be for our image internationally.

Indeed, you would think that, as the GE draws nearer, we'd get intelligent comments being made by all parties concerned, to convince us that the jokers, err leaders, who plan to lead - or even bleed - this country for the next five years, actually have something in between their ears.

But no, not in 1Malaysia Boleh, of course. Not likely indeed.

We've had a couple - or was it just that one? - of insipid public 'debates' of dubious quality which have tended to disintegrate into attacks on personalities rather than seriously discuss policy.

And even then, this was done at a lower level, with the PM, Najib Abdul Razak, evidently more keen on taking on Tiger Woods (left) on the fairways than he is on discussing and debating the country's future direction with the opposition.

I mean, you can't constantly send your second stringers up to the plate to defend your policies and strategies while you go walkabout, can you?

After all, there's only so much bubur lambuk that you can distribute to us hungry masses. Even then, as with financial inducements (from public funds, let us remind you) like BR1M, pre-Raya bonuses and other elements of, shall we say, money politics, your numerous machas can willingly do that for you.

And, to be honest, there really is much to debate about.

First, and this certainly reflects my personal bias, there's this whole question of crime rates that need to be openly discussed. After all the to-ing and fro-ing, we are none the wiser about the situation.

The police, led by the home minister, certainly have not been convincing in asserting that crime rates have dropped. And the public are getting more and more concerned.

Just to take one example, the Teoh Beng Hock case - a crime was apparently committed, a man died while in custody, and there were promises openly made by the PM to his family. The question is: how far have those promises been met?

Then, there's the question of the economy. Given the current woes of the US and European economies, surely there is a need for some discussion of their impact on this region and, particularly, our economy?

And who better to discuss this than our political 'leaders', especially given the suggestions made by opposition politicians about 'alternatives', such as the removal of taxes and duties on motor vehicles.

Need to engage alternative ideas

It's not enough to simply dismiss these 'alternatives' as a lot of hot air. That would be rather infantile and certainly not reflective of a regime that can proudly boast of being 'the best democracy' around.

Instead, there really is a need to engage with these alternative ideas, more so when they are backed by even half-convincing arguments.

Indeed, in this regard, I'm sure there are many Malaysian taxpayers who, over the years since the birth of Proton in the 1980s, have been asking themselves why the heck are they paying through their noses for other (imported) makes while subsidising an industry that is perceived to be unprofitable and without direction?

And while we are on the economy, it would be informative, too, if some light were shed on why, indeed why, the two Malaysian states that seem to have an abundance of natural resources, Sabah and Sarawak, are certainly perceived to be the most impoverished, the most underdeveloped?

Education, too, would be a topic deserving of debate. It is indeed rather sad and truly pathetic that one hardly hears an intelligent word from the ministers (yes, remember there are now two ministries for education) concerned regarding, for example, the ongoing perception that our education standards have been declining at an alarming rate, despite the almost exponential growth of universities and institutions of higher learning locally.

And even if we were to gingerly skirt around the issue of Scorpene, the vast amounts spent on arms and the military would indeed be something worthy of debate. Indeed, RM13 billion plus was reportedly spent on the defence budget last year. And we certainly weren't at war.

So where do all this money go to? A televised debate between, say, the defence minister and, perhaps, MP Tony Pua, while not quite as bruising as a Chong Wei-Lin Dan clash, nonetheless, would provide us poor taxpayers some insights into where our money goes.

But, no, instead of having such productive debates which would reflect a healthy democracy, what we've been having thus far are base accusations being hurled, especially by the silly apparatchiks of the regime.

'Kepala otak' strategy

And demonisation, of course, is central to this primordial strategy. A perfect example of this kepala otak strategy is to hurl accusations at your opponent. And it is often felt - indicating the utter stupidity of these 'scriptwriters' - that this strategy will work if a

'traditional expert', like a bomoh, guru pondok, mysterious-man-from-the-gunung - were to hurl such accusations and insults.

And the accusations, of course, have to be kept simple, for simple minds, with certain key words of no more than two syllables, the current one being HARAM. This, I'm sure, is meant to scare us Muslims s\*\*tless, especially in this fasting month. And prevent us from playing with, let alone voting for, these 'infidels'.

And, for all the talk about a progressive Malaysia undergoing great transformation towards becoming the 'best democracy' around, unfortunately, as we head to the 13th general election, we need to brace ourselves for more such silliness about numerous bogeymen (and women) out to destroy our faith, our spirit, our very soul.

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