

Malaysia's tryst with destiny on Sunday

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COMMENT In one of the most eloquent and moving speeches of the 20th century, Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru announced to the world on Aug 14, 1947: "At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom", and that India had "made a tryst with destiny" upon becoming independent.

On May 5, 2013, this most important of date in our 56 years of independence, Malaysia too will have a date with destiny. True Merdeka is within our grasp, to be freed from the bondage of BN misrule. But are voters ready to take destiny into our hands?

It is a given that the last few days of the campaign, the events occurring on voting day, the counting of the votes and the appointment of the prime minister will be marred by the dirty tricks of BN, and the agencies of the state, in their efforts to steal the general election.

The will of the electorate is without meaning to them. Institutions which, and individuals who, are obliged to discharge their duties honestly, independently and impartially will act in a terribly partisan way. The election will therefore be neither free nor fair.

Nonetheless, the voters, who will ultimately decide Malaysia's future, must not be discouraged. Rather, they must be fortified by a single-minded determination to ensure that Pakatan Rakyat will peacefully take power by becoming victorious in the 13th general election.

Don't let them steal GE13

Individually and collectively, Malaysian voters have much power and influence on the outcome. We must not allow this election to be stolen from us. The measures that we can take include the following:

1. In order to diminish the effect of cheating, a record turnout must take place. If 85 percent of the 13.3 million voters actually cast their ballots, it will mean that more than 11 million Malaysians voted on that day. Every vote counts. Turn up early.

2. In order to diminish the effect of foreigners voting illegally, every genuine Malaysian voter must be vigilant when casting his or her vote. All genuine voters must closely observe those near them in the polling station, engage with them in conversation and if they behave oddly, alert the agents of both parties who should be in attendance at the polling centre.

Tech-savvy voters will no doubt film anything of suspicion and immediately post them on Facebook or YouTube. Millions of Malaysians must record their experiences on Sunday. This will be history in the making.

3. Do not vote for BN merely because the voter has personally received monetary or other benefits in the last few months. Such gifts are blatant electioneering of the worst kind. Indeed, these are prohibited under our election laws (but unfortunately, never enforced by our courts).

Further, this is eventually to be paid for by the taxpayers, which means the voters themselves, or their children. The national debt is rapidly increasing. These payments are not paid from monies belonging to the BN or Najib Abdul Razak. They are abusing their power as trustees of public money to "buy" voters by using the rakyat's own money and giving it back to them.

BN's scare-mongering

4. Do not be frightened by the BN's scare-mongering. Intimidating and threatening Malaysians has been a deliberate electoral policy of the BN. For 44 years, it has been the May 13, 1969 riots.

Two other threats have recently surfaced. First, that Bursa Malaysia will collapse and the economy damaged if Pakatan wins. Secondly, that the hudud will be introduced. Millions of Malaysians who would have voted to bring Pakatan to power will support the Bursa, if prices slide.

It is the policies of the BN that have created the ever-growing natural debt and the massive outflow of funds that have weakened our economy. Pakatan can only strengthen the failed economy.

Insofar as the hudud is concerned, PAS has accepted that it is only part of its party agenda, but not that of the Pakatan coalition. Because a two-thirds majority of Parliament is needed to amend the federal constitution to implement hudud, PAS, on its own, cannot achieve it. Accordingly, all these threats are hollow.

5. For those who remain fearful, remember the comforting words that President Franklin Roosevelt used in his inaugural address in 1933: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

6. Do not be influenced by the brazen propaganda of our TV, radio and mainstream newspapers. They are so one-sided that it offends all decency. Vote according to your conscience. Do what you think is right.

7. In order to reduce the effects of defections and party-hopping by any unprincipled and greedy members of parliament elected on May 5, which could defeat the will of the people, as happened in Sabah in 1991 and Perak in 2009, Malaysians who want change by voting for a Pakatan government must elect a sufficient number of Pakatan parliamentarians.

A simple majority is triggered at 112 out of 222 seats. But any Pakatan victory below 130 seats may not provide a sufficient cushion if crossovers take place. Hence, the popular vote target should be 7.5 million out of 11 million votes, which would mean getting about 68 percent of the popular vote.

If sufficient right-thinking Malaysians act this way, we will finally, after half a century, see the end of a continuous Umno-dominated government.

We will then have a new federal government that will lead us to a new Malaysia: a second, and more important Merdeka. May the Almighty God bless us by ensuring this outcome.

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