

Pakatan's acceptance of polls results is validly provisional

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COMMENT Those with a taste for paradox and irony have had much to keep the muse in working condition the past few weeks.

The ruling BN has been keen - like a soccer team that had won a cup final through a disputed penalty in the last-minute of injury time - to get the opposition Pakatan Rakyat to accept the results of Election 2013.

Even the Agong, unbidden by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, so we are told, sympathises with the desire of Umno-BN to see that the results are accepted with equanimity by all and sundry.

NONE But a recalcitrant opposition has mulled steps such as a boycott of Parliament's opening as a means to convey their protest at the myriad irregularities that only someone, with an ostrich-like disposition, would deny as having occurred during Election 2013.

In the end, Pakatan decided it would be best to go ahead with the oath-taking at the opening of the 13th Parliament but, before the deadline had closed, had filed with the election courts a slew of petitions that disputed BN wins in several seats.

For good measure, BN, too, has filed a host of petitions, calling into question Pakatan wins in certain seats.

As the petitions' battle loomed in the courts, Umno-BN concentrated on garnering as much credibility as they could for the authenticity of their victory, while Pakatan, through a series of public rallies called 'Black 505', proceeded to secrete around the results the odour of the illicit.

The situation rather resembled what in recent decades has tended to happen when the cause of the beatification of a controversial person entered its final phases at the Vatican.

Umno-BN was in the position of postulator of the cause, citing all the reasons for the eminence of its cause, while Pakatan played the Devil's Advocate, dredging up every blemish they could find to cast aspersions on its nobility.

But unlike religious matters which can arrive at a point where the supreme pontiff

can invoke infallibility for the final decision made, matters in the realm of democratic politics have no recourse to the infallibility rule.

This is where the stance of Pakatan that the provisional character of its acceptance of GE13's results is unaffected by the decision of its MPs to proceed with the rituals accompanying the opening of the 13th Parliament is sustainable.

Communication and Multimedia Minister Shabery Cheek contends otherwise. He argued that decision of Pakatan MPs to take the oath of office at the 13th Parliament's formal opening signaled acceptance of the authenticity of the results of GE13.

Humorous vignette

Things aren't as clear cut as Shabery would have it. A humorous vignette culled from British parliamentary history perhaps suffices to make the point of the provisional nature of certain types of recognitions.

In 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill rose in the British Parliament to explain his government's decision to recognise Red China, three years after Mao Zedong's communist-led guerrillas succeeded in ousting Chiang Kai-shek's Koumintang party and expelling their remnant to Taiwan.

Sympathetic to Chiang, several governments withheld recognition of Mao's one, some even to the extent of recognising Chiang as the legitimate ruler of the mainland, even when he was seen to be barely hanging on to an island morsel of the sprawling nation on what was formerly called Formosa, and that too dependent on the protection of the United States' deterrent military power.

In explaining in the British Parliament his action to recognise Mao's China, Churchill resorted to his penchant for directing a light frost of derision at his opponents, one of whom was Aneurin Bevan, the stellar Labour Party MP from the Welsh seat of Ebbw Vale, who in 1948 was the prime mover of Britain's seminal National Health Service.

"When we say that we are recognising a country, it does not always mean that we like them," Churchill said in defence of his administration's gesture.

He continued, while gazing impishly at Bevan, the shadow Health minister, sitting on the bench opposite him:

"Like we all, members of this august House, recognise the Right Honorable, the

gentleman from Ebbw Vale, as the MP for his constituency..."

Churchill left the comment hanging in the air while MPs in chamber tittered with laughter as Bevan, who was rarely slow on the uptake, realised that his nemesis had got the better of him this time.

NONEPakatan does not like the results of GE13 because of a substantive opinion that it is tainted with fraud sufficient to subtract from its authenticity.

But Pakatan is forced to provisionally recognise the legitimacy of GE13's results by participating in the rituals of legitimising the 13th Parliament, enacted earlier this week.

A de jure recognition here should not be conflated with a de facto recognition.

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