

## **LETTER | Why should I bother to vote in GE15?**

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LETTER | Umno's top five met last Friday, pressuring Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob to hold the general election this year, because for them why not? Elections during floods would be so exciting!

I asked myself while hugging my cup of hot black coffee this morning, why do we even vote? What are these “pick your rep” elections for? Does it matter anymore after the Sheraton Move?

General elections are just like exams right? Where politicians are put to the test on whether they did a good job or not for the past term. Or perhaps like a performance review in a company, to check whether the MPs or state assemblypersons hit their KPIs or not.

Did they implement/advocate for good/better public policies? Did they scrutinise government policies (for opposition)? Did they solve people’s problems? Did they push for better public infrastructure to be built in their constituency? Did they

have good programmes?

Or are general elections like a quinquennial (it means every five years) Mega Giveaway Carnival? Where politicians go out and buy votes - sometimes with cash, sometimes by fixing potholes, building roads, sometimes with the giving of zinc roofing sheets.

This is also a good time for some to get “government projects” in exchange for support. But really, power lies with those who control the finances, not with those who know the matter upon which the money is to be spent.

Perhaps general elections are like PR campaigns or a popularity contest in the age of social media. Do you make good TikTok videos?

Do you speak eloquently and explain the issue clearly (never mind the solution)? It's a bonus if you could sing or dance or have some entertainment value.

I think general elections in Malaysia are very elitist, it's a game for the rich and well-connected.

It is a game of strategy for politicians, like Command & Conquer or Age of Empires.

Pakatan Harapan gained much more ground politically because Malaysia has been rapidly urbanising, BN knows its strength, and so does Harapan.

However, the three biggest hurdles for opposition politics in Malaysia have been East Malaysia, the rural Malay votes and a biased electoral system - this is a story for another day.

Many Malaysians, even the elites in Umno believe that nothing truly bad will happen to them. For example, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's foreign visa corruption case? Acquitted.

Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim's money laundering from road projects? DNAA (discharge not amounting to an acquittal). LTAT and LCS scandals? Felda bribery case? Tabung Haji corruption and money laundering case? Takpe lah.

And the list goes on ... Najib is in jail because of the power struggle within Umno.

When we vote, do you really think you can change the government with your one vote?

I am barely convinced when I shout "Every vote counts!". Maybe I should change the slogan to "Every ringgit counts!" or "Malaysians need to survive, so we count

every ringgit.

On a separate note, many Malaysians vote to keep the status quo, because many are poor but in our comfort zone. Life is good.

Why you should still vote in GE15?

In spite of what I said, I think that we should still vote. Why?

It's like a game of tug of war - I am only assuming a straight fight of the bigger, more relevant parties – when one side exhausts its energy (and resources), they need time to recuperate and build strength.

For example, the election in the richest state in Malaysia by GDP, Selangor, is expected to be a closely fought battle between BN and Harapan.

Both BN and Harapan are currently tied with seven parliamentary constituency seats each, while five of the constituencies are still not aligned. Selangor is expected to be a key battleground in GE15, whereby observers will be keeping a watchful eye to see if Harapan will continue to lead the Selangor state government for another five years or end their 14 years of reign that began in 2008.

If suddenly on the day before the “championship” some team members abandon the team, let’s go, and give up. What will happen? The remaining team members would not only lose but also be badly bruised.

How will Malaysia look like then if the opposition becomes so weakened to the extent that they need 10 years to “regain health”? Ten years is a long time for uncontrollable greed to be roaming free in Malaysia.

We must vote. We have no choice but to stay on the team. If you don’t, the championships will look very different 10 years on from today.

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