

A by-election's six lessons
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 27, 2007
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Perhaps it's still early, but there are observations to share and lessons to be drawn from the Ijok by-election. These useful lessons can be used for all imminent by-elections.

Lesson 1: How to make millions without breaking a sweat

Pray that your BN 'wakil rakyat' kicks the bucket, or if that sounds too sinister, ask him or her to sacrifice his position by stepping down, and call for a by-election. Entice to his/her self-serving nature by saying that Barisan will pour money and he/she has a chance to benefit financially from the windfall. This ruse will do the trick. Once that happens, money that was not available in the state coffers will magically appear from thin air.

Your town will suddenly see an influx of development, leaders and hoodlums, at a pace unseen before in your life. Allocations which were not discussed in parliament, or state assemblies or council budgets, will make its appearance. Due elementary budgetary process applicable in Bangladesh or India are not applicable in Malaysia. The losers, Barisan's corporate cronies and civil service slaves, will have to fork out magic money at the EPF contributor's expense.

Roads will become clean, smooth and brightly lit. If Barisan's 'wakil rakyat' for Damansara Utama, Klang Lama, Cheras, Bandar Tun Razak, Taman Melawati, Bandar Klang, Bangi, Serdang, are willing to seek by-elections, Malaysians would have less visits to the auto repair shop.

Don't forget to demand money as your compensation for the hardship of having to contend with constant Barisan propaganda and the same pocket pinching 'wakil rakyat' since Merdeka. Don't be satisfied with RM100 or RM200 - ask for RM20,000 or a million if you're desperate. Claim that you can get 30 voters, ie, your wife, children and relatives, hence you cost a bit more.

You can also claim your great-grandmother, who was born in 1900, is a registered voter and Barisan and the Election Commission will help make the necessary arrangements for voting day. If your great-grandmother can't rise from the grave, claim that your child is a voter.

Lesson 2: How to compel, arguably the second most powerful man in the country, to do your bidding.

Barisan's candidate, after several days of campaigning, shakes hands and fakes a smile with the people of Ijok. Although the national spotlight was focused on Barisan's candidate, surprisingly, the candidate made no official comment, hardly communicated, and avoided debates at all costs. Heck, forget about extolling any plan or vision for Ijok either.

All matters were handled by a bloke who happens to be the deputy prime minister, who decided to relinquish his designated national role to take on the much more important role of Parthiban's public relations consultant. The task is made easier as all media outlets are

owned by Barisan anyway, but the DPM is not taking chances.

Apart from abusing government machinery and TV channels RTM1, RTM2, the DPM and the Barisan cronies also used TV3, NTV7, TV8, TV9, and Astro as they are all owned by their cronies too - Media Prima. And as not every Malaysian has a television, Barisan employed all of the print media as well. The opposition and independent media are only allowed to inhabit cyberspace.

Lesson 3: How to compel, arguably the most powerful man in the country, as well as state chiefs, ministers, half the country's leaders, and most important of all, 'mat rempits' to do your bidding.

Very few ministers nowadays are seen hanging around in parliament. Debating is not our culture, and parliament is accepted as a rubber stamp, but it does seem very strange that the country's most important leaders, Parthiban's spokesperson, Najib Razak, and his cohorts, Selangor Menteri Besar Khir Toyo, Works Minister S Samy Vellu, Penang state chief Koh Tsu Koon all decided to skip their civil and fiscal duties to descend to a little known rural town.

Most important of all, get the 'mat rempits' to be on your side by providing cheap thrills. Have a carnival-like atmosphere at Barisan's enclave of Rumah Perlis, Rumah Kelantan, Rumah Negeri Sembilan, Rumah Melaka, Rumah Pahang, Rumah Kedah, etc. Cater food everyday for 1,000 people and invite the town to breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Abuse and mishandle as much money as possible as all is forgiven during by an election. The Election Commission officers will be somewhere in outer space and will not notice any election fraud despite all the lavish parties and development gifts. Unethically spend RM36 million and nobody will notice.

Lesson 4: How to belittle the opposition candidate

Despite being a state chief, ignore honour and dignity and accuse the opposition of all thinkable evils. Belittle the opposition candidate, such as 'he was merely a water boy'. Conveniently forget the various Umnoputra sycophants and accuse Khalid Ibrahim of being merely a corporate figure.

Don't mention that he was the ex-CEO of PNB, ex-CEO of Guthrie, assisted in the formation of ASB and ASN, allocated RM500 million for student loans and helped PNB acquire Guthrie from the London Stock Exchange in 1981.

Silence the fact that he was one of the few Malay corporate genius and became CEO when he was 33 years old. Ignore all this and create a drama by claiming that you will cut of your little finger if Tan Sri gives any money to the community.

Lesson 5: How to threaten the opposition

As the battle cry in Ijok, 'gempur' is a word associated with Pemuda Umno. According to the Kamus Dewan, 'gempur' means creating havoc, or 'huru-hara'. Notwithstanding Pemuda's motto, throw accusations instead to the opposition that they are creating a ruckus, by throwing water bottles and sticks. Never mind if the bottles have the Barisan logo on it, just

pretend that the opposition drank Barisan's mineral water, even though they weren't provided with any.

Let 'mat rempits' and gangsters roam and intimidate the opposition. Of special mention is the red scorpion team from Pemuda Umno dressed in menacing black shirts, jeans and sunglasses. They would have looked cool, if not for their faces resembling their red logo.

Their leader, the high-pitched Hishammuddin Hussein Onn and his deputy, the jeering Khairy Jamaluddin, tried to look menacing but just didn't come across so. Hisham and KJ's pretend macho 'I'm really really angry' expression could not even match Rosmah's natural 'I'm going to get you' look.

Lesson 6: How the candidate becomes prime minister

Some people swear that come election time, every constituency will see the rise of a familiar face. In Ijok, almost all of the 'dacing' posters resemble the familiar vote-for-me 'X' mark but with the portrait of a man in 'songkok', wearing a 'baju melayu' with a graying moustache. The last time we looked at the candidate, he didn't resemble anything like that.

Some Barisan friends, who wanted a Malay candidate, have insisted that Pak Lah is contesting in Ijok and is actually disguised as the local candidate. That's why Pak Lah's posters are all over the place. Many people find this hard to believe.

Some others have insisted that this accusation is ridiculous. Pak Lah is not contesting in this by-election as he is not one to lose his precious time over this unnecessary circus. Pak Lah is also not one to speak on behalf of the candidate, morning, afternoon and evening, more so he is unfamiliar with the local Javanese dialect.

Others insist that it is, in fact, not Pak Lah but another personality. This personality's poster is also prominent all over in Ijok and this personality is familiar with the local community and speaks the same language. They say that Khir Toyo is able to transform his appearance and change his look to resemble the candidate. So is Khir Toyo the candidate? That explains why the candidate hardly says anything - his Javanese accent might give him away.

Finally, remember, despite the relentless evils perpetrated by BN, Barisan's greedy and self-serving members will forever defend BN's actions with weak and fickle arguments on TV, in the newspapers and through other media outlets. As long as the rakyat refuse to have the courage to stand up to their nonsense. It is time we wise up and reject unethical promises of money and development for votes. Do the right thing, reject Barisan!

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