

The dirtiest by-election in history
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Kim Quek

Despite the ruling Barisan Nasional obtaining higher votes in the Ijok by-election against opposition PKR, the real losers are BN and Malaysia.

Why? In an orgy of abuse of power and violation of the constitution and election laws by BN, the latter's villainous role is exposed to the hilt, Malaysian election has been debased to the lowest level imaginable, and the nation has lost the last semblance of a democracy.

How? Through massive official and covert bribery, phantom voters, and violence.

Is there a winner in this election? Yes, it is Anwar Ibrahim and the entire opposition.

Why is that so? BN's desperate attempt to win at all costs – committing the worst breaches of laws and exposing Malaysia to ridicule of the world – is by itself a demonstration of the extent of its fear of the Anwar factor in Malaysian politics.

Through conducting the dirtiest election in Malaysian history, BN has ironically achieved the opposite of what it set out to do – to prove to Malaysians and the world that Anwar is a spent force, and to snuff out the Anwar resurgence.

In the process, Anwar has re-emerged as the undisputed icon of the masses with his firepower intact, opposition parties have been thrown closer together than ever, and BN has proven to be the rogue that tramples on the constitution and betrays the people's trust.

The great tragedy is that, except for those who follow the election through the Internet, most Malaysians sleep through the entire catastrophe without realising it, thanks to the abetment and cover-up of these crimes by the local press and television channels.

You might ask: what is the proof of all that? Evidences are plenty, enough to fill up a whole book. For this article, I can only briefly relate the more important ones.

Bribery galore

Even before nomination day on April 19, BN had commenced instant infrastructure projects just like cooking instant noodles.

Numerous construction teams had already been working around the clock all over the Ijok constituency to pave and widen roads, installing street lightings, constructing drains, laying water pipes, etc, under an instantaneous fund allocation of RM36 million announced by Selangor Menteri Besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo.

In addition to this RM36 million allocation, BN leaders led by Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had been announcing new and instantaneous fund allocations amounting to many millions almost daily throughout the nine-day campaign period in this constituency of only 12,000 voters.

These are for the construction of a new mosque in Taman Purnama (RM5 million), refurbishing

and upgrading numerous mosques, suraus, schools, including a donation of RM1 million to Yuk Chih School to complete a new hall and the rehabilitation of a landfill (RM2.3 million).

Also, 400 land titles were awarded on the spot.

To further entice the electors, Works Minister and MIC president S Samy Vellu proudly announced to the voters in Tuan Mee on April 26 that he had got estate owner KL Kepong Bhd to agree to the low-cost housing proposal put up by them only two days ago (according to Samy).

This project, announced in the presence of the company's senior manager Chuan Chong Meng, will give options to the estate workers (who are also voters) to purchase at the preferential price of RM35,000 per unit against the list price of RM42,000 for others.

No doubt, this is another feather in the cap for Samy Vellu in his effort to rope in the corporate sector to grant instantaneous favour to voters with the obvious purpose to induce votes in favour of BN.

Perhaps the most dramatic of such vote-inducement is the moment when Najib was caught red-handed doing a land-for-vote deal in the video, which is now widely circulated in the Internet.

Just hours before the closing of election campaign at midnight April 27, Najib announced in Tuan Mee to a jubilant crowd of Indian voters that he personally guaranteed that the land applied for by the Indian community there would be speedily granted by the BN government.

In return, the audience promised to make Tuan Mee the district that would give BN the strongest electoral support in the by-election.

Earlier, the residents were given 200 units of sewing machines as gifts by MIC.

For such explicit vote-buying and supported by such irrefutable evidence, Najib (and Samy) should be charged under Section 10 (a) and (c) of the Election Offences Act 1954 and punished under Section 11 of the same Act, which stipulates that such convicted offender shall be barred for election for five years, in addition to a maximum imprisonment of two years and fine of RM5,000.

The Election Commission and the attorney-general should therefore waste no further time to charge these offenders, failing which PKR should initiate immediate court action to bring the culprits to book.

Meanwhile, PKR should seek a court injunction to suspend the result of this election, pending a hearing to declare this election null and void.

Abuse of power

Since the beginning of the election campaign, the entire Ijok constituency was heavily manned by police and the Federal Reserve Unit armed with riot gear, giving Ijok the appearance of a war zone.

Then, just days before election day, the police, backed by FRU, began to move in to disrupt opposition ceramah (political talks) on the ridiculous ground that the opposition had no police

permit, when no such permit was ever needed during elections.

This sudden clamp down by police was obviously prompted by their political masters, who must have felt panic in the rising tide of support to PKR, following the arrival of the top guns of DAP and PAS to reinforce PKR's campaign.

As a result of this police disturbance, many opposition rallies were halted and cancelled. This is a breach of police discipline, as its function in the election is to maintain peace among contesting parties and not to play partisan political role.

BN's abuse of government machinery had also extended to the other ministries such as those of Tourism, Information and Higher Education, whose personnel and resources were unabashedly deployed to support BN's campaign.

The worst abuse takes place at the Election Commission (EC), which have been made to function more as an arm of Umno rather than an independent body under the constitution to conduct free and fair election.

Worse than doing nothing to check the avalanche of abuses that had destroyed the legitimacy and legality of this election, EC chairman Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman abetted such abuses by declaring that these instantaneous allocations of development funds to induce votes during the election is an acceptable practice that does not amount to vote-buying.

With such endorsement from EC, is it any wonder why BN had gone haywire in its unrestrained throwing of public funds to buy votes?

Opposition members of parliament should move to censure the EC chairman in Parliament for this betrayal of his constitutional role. And BN should also be similarly censured for making a mockery of our election system through such blatant abuses.

Phantom voters

Through a door-to-door checking against the electoral roll, PKR had found many cases of irregularities and discrepancies, grouped as follows:

- * Non-existent electors: Malay voters' addresses are occupied by Chinese who have been living there for decades. And vice-versa. In one village alone, there are 35 such cases.

- * Electors cannot be found at the listed addresses, where the current occupants profess no knowledge of the listed electors.

- * Electoral roll stuffed with improbable voters: there are 31 voters aged above 100, and over 200 voters aged above 90.

- * Many electors are long deceased.

The above dubious electors are fertile loopholes for phantom voters to cast their votes.

Coupled with those who sell their votes for cash (recorded clips of such wheeling-dealing are circulated in the Internet), PKR estimated before election day that there would be 1,700 to 1,800 phantom voters.

Indeed on election day, two bus loads of some 80 un-uniformed women from Perlis leaving the Bukit Badong polling station were intercepted by PKR at 4pm on tips that some on board the buses were carrying two ICs.

A scuffle between the two camps of supporters erupted and the buses were taken to Ijok police station. The Perlis women were released at 8:15pm while PKR leaders who made the police report were detained and released only at 9:30pm on police bail, and Umno leaders who made similar police report were allowed to walk out freely.

According to PKR leader Ezam Mohd Noor who was at the police station, in addition to being barred from talking to the Perlis women, PKR was totally kept in the dark as to what actually transpired in the investigation of the Perlis women.

PKR was not even informed when the Perlis women left the police station. If there was nothing to hide, why the total secrecy and why the attempt to deliberately isolate the complainants and keep them in total darkness?

Look at the blatant double standard in treating PKR leaders and Umno leaders, while the former were detained as suspected criminals, the latter were allowed to walk out freely.

And as usual in this country, culprits walk free while whistleblowers are criminalised. And this, I am afraid, is the label of the BN government.

Najib and other BN leaders have denied there was any phantom voter, but the facts speak for themselves.

In the Bukit Badong polling station, where the two suspected buses were parked, the voter turnout was an implausible 90.1 percent. Similarly, the overall polling rate for the entire constituency is also an unprecedented 83.1 percent.

Violence and Khalid attacked

One feature that marks off this election from any other election is the abundant and ready use of violence to sabotage the opponent, and the main culprit is Umno Youth.

The latter used violence to prevent PKR election workers to enter areas deemed BN territories, and even PKR leaders were attacked.

PKR candidate Khalid Ibrahim himself narrowly escaped attacks twice while a photographer in his entourage was wounded.

In another incident on April 27, where 50 Umno Youth members encircled and blocked 15 PKR workers at the entrance to Taman Sunuh Bestari at Rantau Panjang, PKR pamphlets were forcibly taken away and torn to pieces, while PKR leader Xavier Jayakumar was kicked.

Opposition solidarity

An unexpected windfall to the opposition was the solidarity forged during the embattled campaign by PKR.

Alarmed and disgusted by BN's dishonourable tactics of rampant bribery, squandering of

public funds, abuses of government machinery and excessive use of violence, both DAP and PAS quickly joined forces with PKR to fend off BN's mounting assault.

The vigorous efforts put in by PAS' president and deputy president, and by DAP's top leaders including opposition leader Lim Kit Siang at the last phase of the campaign auger well for cooperative effort among opposition in future election.

As for PKR, it should take pride and comfort that in spite of such intensely adverse conditions, it could clinch half of both the Chinese and Malay votes.

This is an achievement of great significance, for Ijok's mixed race and rural characteristics represent the kind of constituency where BN is traditionally the strongest.

Garnering half of Chinese votes in a rural area is indeed a breakthrough for PKR, for the former are traditionally BN supporters.

And retaining half of Malay support despite the advocacy to replace the New Economic Policy with Anwar's non-racial New Economic Agenda is a reassuring signal that Anwar is making good a start in his reform crusade among the Malays.

Ijok by-election bonanza

Date	Allocations	Value
April 15	Construction of Ubudiah mosque at Taman Purnama	RM5 million
April 18	Public facilities (roads, street lighting, drainage etc)	RM36 million
April 19	NOMINATION DAY	
April 20	Refurbishment of Al-Awwabin mosque	RM800,000
April 21	Land titles for more than 400 lots	Unknown
	Upgrading SMK Raja Muda Musa	Unknown
	New hall for SRJK (C) Yuk Chih	RM800,000
April 22	Kpg Bukit Badong mosque upgrading	RM300,000
	Rehabilitating landfill	RM2.3 million
April 23	Grants and approval letters to seven mosques, 16 suraus and six religious schools	RM3.5 million
	To build an Islamic center in Taman Pancaran	RM200,000
April 24	New health clinic in Batang Berjuntai	RM16 million
	Upgrading existing clinics in the area	RM4 million
April 26	Additional funds for SRJK (C) Yuk Chih	RM200,000
April 27	Land titles for Tuan Mee estate workers. Surveys to be conducted within 3 to 4 months	Unknown
	Batang Berjuntai multi purpose hall	RM800,000
	Refurbishment of road leading to Ijok chinese cemetery	RM500,000
	Rebuilding of Chin Loong temple, destroyed by fire	RM100,000
	Construction of 'Datuk Kong' chinese temple	RM10,000
	Batang Berjuntai recreation centre	RM5,000
April 28	POLLING DAY	

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