

Campaigning: Keep emotions in check
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The coming by-election in Ijok reminds us of the Lunas mêlée six years ago. Political aficionados have yet to learn from the Lunas peril. It seems like political vehemence become uncontrollable when it involves candidates of different races vying to be elected in a particular ethnic-majority constituency.

Politically, the Alliance, and later the Barisan Nasional, has ruled the country for the past 50 years, fielding candidates of different races in all the past elections. In the spirit of nationhood, thus far all races have been represented in the government. The major races usually had their candidates represented in constituencies where they form the majority race.

There are indeed Chinese or Malay majority constituencies in the country but not a single constituency in the country has an Indian majority electorate. In the spirit of power sharing, though, candidates of Indian ethnic origin have been given the opportunity to contest in Malay or Chinese majority constituencies by the BN.

In most cases, a Chinese candidate is pit against a Chinese opposition candidate and a Malay candidate is pit against a Malay opposition candidate in past elections. This norm has been accepted by all the BN component parties.

As for the DAP it has fielded, in most instances, Chinese or Indian candidates as contenders and there were incidences in the past where even Malay candidates had represented DAP and winning in Chinese majority areas. The electorate in those cases rejected out of hand ethnicity when it came to voting for a candidate. Even Indian candidates representing the DAP had won in Chinese majority areas. PAS, on the other hand, has traditionally fielded Malay Muslim candidates in Malay majority constituencies.

The Ijok by-election now reminds us of the Lunas by-election. In the latter, BN fielded an Indian to contest against a Malay opposition candidate. It was a Malay majority constituency. This was enough to cause a big swirl.

Malaysians saw many unpleasant incidents – threats were the name of the game during the campaign period. Emotions ran high among supporters on both sides of the turf. It was one of the most unwholesome political canvassing periods in the history of elections in Malaysia. Hopefully, this mêlée is not repeated during the Ijok by-election campaign period.

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