

Electoral Fraud – Part And Parcel Of Our Election Process

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Allegations of electoral fraud – and the Election Commission’s complicity in this fraud – are not something that is new or recent. Such allegations have been part and parcel of every election that has taken place.

If anything, these allegations have become credible because irrefutable evidence of fraudulent registrations have been unearthed in the electoral roll. What we have seen exposed are not few and minor incidences that may be explained away quite easily. Clearly, these are rampant and, therefore, disturbing.

Dubious voters

The late P Patto who lost to Samy Vellu in the Sungai Siput contest in 1990 by a narrow margin of 1763 votes revealed why he lost that year during a forum at the Penang Chinese Assembly Hall. He explained that Indian voters were registered at Chinese residences when there were no tenants living there; others were registered at non-existent addresses and some addresses attributed to certain voters turned out to be at the cemetery! He also revealed that voters were brought from Klang in buses to cast their votes in Sungai Siput. These are serious cases of electoral fraud.

This is a story that goes back to 1990 – 21 years ago! But the pattern persists even today.

The blog Perisik Rakyat, run by a Kelantan-based blogger, revealed that 64 names were registered under one address – No 1138, Kampung Bagan Serai, Permatang Pauh, Penang. According to the blogger, of the 64 voters, 51 are Malays and the rest Indians.

Following Perisik’s disclosure, another blogger Milo Suam further revealed that another 88 “ghost” voters were also registered under one address – No 1155, Kampung Bagan Serai, Jalan Sembilang, Seberang Jaya, Permatang Pauh, Penang. These 88 voters comprise Malays, Chinese and Indians – men and women. According to Milo Suam the address belonged to a “small wooden house just a few metres away from the other address” that purportedly housed the 64 voters.

This seems to indicate that Anwar Ibrahim’s constituency is being targeted to defeat the Opposition leader in a concerted manner. Anwar is seen as the greatest threat to the survival of the BN and therefore he has to be defeated.

It is also learnt that a similar scam has been uncovered in one of the addresses in the Tambun constituency in Perak.

According to Malaysiakini, a permanent resident by the name of Mismah was registered as a voter and when this was exposed she mysteriously became a citizen four hours later!

Pas reported a total of 1,597 similar cases nationwide and 1,100 in Selangor alone. Is this part of the design to realise Najib’s declaration that the BN would “get back Selangor at any cost”? Pray tell, at what cost, Mr PM? By sacrificing democracy at the altar of expediency and ignoring the principles

of justice and fairness?

It is also discovered that some two dozen spouses of military personnel were found to have registered using their spouses civilian My Kad thus qualifying themselves for double votes. Why would these spouses want an extra vote?

The DAP revealed its largest haul of electoral discrepancies yet with 234 voters having identical old identity card numbers. "These numbers are in pairs, with 117 of the voters matching their 'twins' despite having different names and new identity card numbers." said PJ Utara MP Tony Pua.

These are not isolated cases. They are wide-spread and come across as common features in opposition-controlled constituencies. There seems to be a concerted and consistent attempt to inject dubious voters into opposition constituencies paving the way for the BN to recapture these constituencies and spring back into power.

What has been revealed is only the tip of the iceberg. If the system had allowed for greater scrutiny, without doubt many thousands of fake votes would have been revealed.

At the moment the parties are given only one week to object after the electoral roll has been revised and that doesn't give anyone sufficient time to scan the roll with a fine tooth-comb. If the EC expects help from the political parties it must be seen to be serious about it. It must give the parties concerned at least two months to ferret out the phantom voters.

Shady postal votes

While the 'dirty' electoral roll is one aspect of the election process that has always been an obstacle to free and fair elections, there are also other disadvantages that the opposition has to contend with.

Postal votes have saved the BN on many occasions. There have been many rumours that top military, police and security leaders have played a vital role in postal votes. It has been bandied about that they instruct their personnel to vote for the BN.

Recently some former military personnel have revealed how they were instructed to vote for the BN on behalf of the entire contingent. As no political agents are permitted to be present while the postal voting process takes place, nobody actually knows how this voting is conducted.

It is also common knowledge that certain constituencies have seen a surge in postal votes. An entire military contingent can be posted anywhere without any questions being asked thus giving the BN an undue advantage. It was this ruse that won for Lee San Choon the Seremban parliamentary constituency in April 1982. He just managed to defeat DAP strongman Chen Man Hin in his stronghold by 845 votes.

Now this is being deployed quite brazenly. Reports have pointed to an increase in postal votes in Negeri Sembilan and in Penang. These are allegedly found in certain constituencies held by the opposition which the BN hopes to capture.

On top of this, spouses of military personnel have now opted for postal voting in Penang. While they were ordinary voters in the past, why is it necessary to register as postal voters? What scheme is being hatched for the 13th General Elections?

Strangely, however, all Malaysians living abroad are not entitled to postal votes even though they are registered voters. Only military personnel, public servants, full time government-sponsored students and their spouses are allowed to vote under the “Absentee-Voters” category.

Why are the others (who do not fall in these categories) denied their right to vote? Is it because they are seen as not inclined towards the BN? It is difficult to come to any other conclusion.

Gerrymandering

Gerrymandering is another method adopted to favour the BN. The manner in which certain constituencies are drawn up indeed defies logic. Opposition-controlled constituencies are allowed to remain as a single huge constituency when they could very well be divided into two or three constituencies which can be serviced responsibly by their respective representatives.

Bersih 2.0 has pointed out this disparity recently. Kapar constituency has 112,224 registered voters while many rural seats have voters in the region of 50,000. The Putrajaya seat, mainly comprising civil servants, has a mere 7,000 voters.

Such glaring disparities are deliberately created so that the opposition can never win any more parliamentary seats than what cannot be helped. More rural seats means a greater advantage for the BN – that seems to be the rule to be followed!

Abuse of the media

Yet there is another unethical and immoral practice that is resorted to by the BN without a whimper from the EC. The way the print and electronic media is abused to the greater advantage of the BN to the extent of denigrating and demeaning the opposition is totally unbelievable in a democracy. In a true democracy, the opposition should get equal time to propagate their party platform. This is wholly denied.

While the EC may claim with certain justification it has no authority to demand equal coverage for the opposition, surely on moral grounds it can publicly condemn the unfair practice that gives the BN undue advantage. This could have some effect in forcing the BN to yield at least some coverage time.

Election offences

Another diabolical favourite method of campaigning is to dish out goodies in an outlandish manner. Roads are tarred, drains are repaired, handouts given, projects announced, voters threatened that they will be denied development in their areas – all these clearly constitute election offences. When anything is given or promised during the campaign period to induce the voters to vote in favour of certain parties, that is definitely wrong and an offence under the election laws.

Time for change

But the EC had never taken the BN to task for their unethical behaviour. This is why the EC is seen as pro-BN and never as pro-democracy.

The present EC is not capable of conducting free and fair elections. It must be disbanded and a new

Election Commission instituted comprising people of impeccable integrity. Only then will elections be meaningful.

For this to take place, a new government is necessary; otherwise, it will be the same rotten deal forever.

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