

## **Are Malaysians Politically Mature?**

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**By Mohd Hisham Abdul Rafar**

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- Malaysia's 13th general election, the most intensely fought in its history, was over on May 5, but while many chose to move on, some are still dissatisfied with the outcome and continue to hold protest gatherings.

A series of demonstrations and protest gatherings had been organised since May 8, filled with fiery speeches that were seditious, slanderous, abusive and inciting by those with vested interest, in manipulating people's sentiments and emotions as though this is the new style of politics in Malaysia.

The Dewan Rakyat sitting for the first session after the GE13 which is scheduled for this June 24 appears to be "meaningless" for the parliamentarians from the DAP-PKR-PAS opposition pact, as reflected by their bemusing "drama" recently, although they now hold 89 out of the total 222 seats.

The question is whether with just seven more years before Malaysia achieves developed-nation status, the opposition's politics can be regarded as mature politics.

Assoc Prof Datuk Dr Samsul Adabi Mamat from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia said achieving developed-nation status would require a paradigm shift, for Malaysians to be more mature with all quarters practising the politics of balance and moderation.

He said protest gatherings at various venues and street demonstrations were the opposition's way of political expression capable of influencing the public and at the same time, detrimental to the nation economically and socially, and development-wise.

"Mature politics is the politics of moderation and balance compared to extreme politics which can destroy the nation. The 'rakyat' (people) need to understand this," he said.

The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities lecturer pointed out that political stability alone was not enough if not accompanied by political maturity.

He said politicians and the general public must realise that the country was facing challenges from inside and outside the country, as well as threats from foreign elements out to create instability.

"Political maturity also means that the society is highly knowledgeable and able to read and analyse the actions of others; whether they are bad or good for the country," he said.

He cited the United States, Britain and Japan as countries with citizens having political maturity while Malaysia was moving more towards progressive democracy.

The GE13 which saw an increase in the number of seats won by the DAP-PKR-PAS opposition pact and 84.8 per cent voter turnout, also showed that the people were practising democracy to bring about change through the vote.

However, is the opposition pact capable of playing an effective check-and-balance role or continue to indulge in politicking and manipulating the sentiments and emotions of the

people?

"Opposing anything should be done civilly. If it is done in an extreme manner, the government needs to take stern action as it could threaten public order and security," said Samsul Adabi.

He said spewing hatred, slander and abusive words, and holding street demonstrations would only kill the feelings of mutual respect among the various communities and would drag the country to regression.

Social activist Khairil Hafizd Khairuddin, 31, described the kind of politics practised in this country as semi-mature due to the actions of some quarters that were too driven by emotions to the extent of disrupting public order.

He said the lack of political knowledge was also one of the reasons for people to be easily influenced and joined street demonstrations without considering the effects.

"It is immature for any group to voice their dissatisfaction through street demonstrations or protest gatherings. What's the use of Parliament if the people's problems are not voiced out in the august house? Why choose the streets instead?"

"To me, all these are aimed at tarnishing the image of the government and country, besides achieving the agenda of certain quarters including foreign parties," he added.

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