

Cheating or not, there is always 'Plan B' for BN
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COMMENT I So Najib Abdul Razak has rebutted allegations that BN would cheat in the 14th general election (GE14).

The prime minister **told** a youth gathering in Sungai Pelek, Selangor on Sunday that "we don't cheat, we form the government based on the people's votes".

I'm not so sure I want to believe the prime minister. And I doubt it's only me who is a non-believer.

Many BN legislators, past or present, who were elected via allegedly dubious means would also agree with me. That is, if they have any conscience left in them.

I also believe that those in Pakatan Harapan today who were previously on the BN side would also know that Najib is lying.

They are probably aware that they had benefitted in some ways in the elections in years gone by because of certain "advantages" being on the BN ticket.

At times, I wonder why former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad or former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim had never ever denied any electoral cheating by BN when they were in power.

I would like to think that they were just being honest because they were aware that certain discrepancies, with or without their knowledge, actually existed during elections.

This could be the reason why Mahathir and Anwar during their time as PM and DPM did not, for once, deny any cheating by BN despite similar accusations by the Opposition.

But strangely, Najib did.

I call it strange because if there is no cheating at all, why the need to deny anything?

In politics, a hundred and one accusations and allegations are being hurled publicly on a daily basis. No politician should waste his or her time responding to each and every allegation.

Najib cannot blame those who described him as a serial liar.

Mind you, it's not just anyone. Mahathir was the first to call the prime minister "a liar" following their first meeting on 1MDB whereby Najib could not offer satisfactory answers to Mahathir's queries on the sovereign fund back in 2013.

After that, "the liar" tag somehow stuck with Najib and which the prime minister, unfortunately, finds great difficulty to shrug off.

Looking out for 'hanky-panky'

Why do I believe that there is some form of cheating during elections? Let me relate this account of what a former Sarawak BN minister turned oppositionist once told me.

In the 1996 Sarawak state election, I contested the Batu Lintang seat in Kuching. It was my electoral debut and I was the secretary-general of the State Reform Party (Star) at that time.

My party president, Dr Patau Rubis, warned me to be on the look-out for any hanky-panky on polling night when the votes were tabulated before the results were announced.

Patau was the experienced hand and I was the newbie, so he did right in cautioning me.

Patau, who was sacked from the Sarawak cabinet a year earlier, had been a BN candidate since 1982.

Something happened in his Tasik Biru constituency during the 1987 state polls – an abrupt election called by Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud following the infamous Ming Court revolt against him.

Patau did not join the revolt and was supporting Taib at that time.

That night as the votes were counted, as related by Patau, a certain “official” approached him, asking whether he had enough votes to secure victory.

If not, Patau was told, the BN’s Plan B was in place. Another three boxes of votes, totaling about 2,000 “additional” votes, could be brought in to ensure his (Patau’s) and BN’s victory in Tasik Biru.

As the tabulation drew to a close, and after it was clear that BN and Patau were cruising to victory, the same “official” walked up to the candidate again and whispered in his ear, “I don’t think Plan B is necessary. You are winning”.

Patau never told me whether he knew the “official” or not. I didn’t want to pester him on that, for electoral secrets among BN candidates and their bosses ought to be respected.

It was good enough that he had warned me to be wary of electoral fraud, such as vote-rigging in the Tasik Biru case. I was more prepared for my second electoral outing in the 2001 Sarawak polls.

It must be noted that the 1987 Sarawak polls were a “do or die” battle for Taib. His opponent was none other than his own uncle, Abdul Rahman Yakub, who led the Maju group against him in the elections.

To ensure that he stays on as CM, Taib (*photo*) must win at all costs. And we all know what a desperate leader can and will do.

A major revolt

Today, Najib is facing a similar threat as Taib in 1987. This is a major revolt against his leadership. And the man leading the opposition against his rule is none other than his former mentor, Mahathir. Seriously, who can be a bigger challenger than that!

Can we expect Najib and BN to conduct a free and fair GE14? Didn’t we hear that it will be the dirtiest elections ever?

If everything was above board, then why did thousands of Malaysians come out in protest during Bersih 1 to 5? Because they know that elections in Malaysia are never clean and fair.

The re-delineation of electoral boundaries and gerrymandering are but two of BN's "advantages" before an election. What actually happens on the ground at the polling and tallying centres is also crucial.

So, dear Prime Minister Najib, I find it impossible to believe your denial that BN would cheat in GE14. And to be fair, it's not only you.

If Mahathir or Anwar were in power today and had issued the same denial, I would also brush them off as liars.

Why? There is always "Plan B" to secure a BN victory.

If I were a BN candidate and if I knew that I had won through fraudulent means, I doubt I would be able to sleep soundly for the rest of my days.

But I believe many could. And that's the saddest part of it all.

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