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# Hope for elegant elections



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**A GOOD MODEL:** The GE13 should display a code of conduct becoming of a democratic, fair society with basic decency

COME midnight May 4, throughout the country political parties will stop their campaigns officially. However, in political party offices and homes of candidates and supporters, people will continue to engage in quiet and unofficial campaigns.

Some people will go to bed early and some will continue to stay awake into the wee hours of the morning.

If one has the opportunity to drive from Johor Baru, Kangar or Kota Baru to Kuala Lumpur passing by rubber plantations, oil palm estates and padi fields, one would experience a unique and excitingly celebratory mood of the nation.

All along roads, byways, towns and villages, there will be banners, and bunting of different sizes and splash of colours of the contesting political parties. Millions of party flags and election campaign materials with their own symbols, model planes, rockets, and tanks will be decorating the nation.

Amid the heraldry, there will be some mischief makers disrupting the management of peaceful electoral processes. It is necessary to identify such people associated with bad leaders who do not respect democratic rights. The individual citizen must keep records of all untoward incidents by note-taking or picture-taking. All such evidence will be useful, not just for now, but for the future.

Typically, there are two schools of thought of leadership as regards to wrong actions by their followers. One school is where the leadership team states that they are not accountable for what their flock does. The second school of thought is one where leaders will hold themselves accountable when their flock crosses the line. In the latter case, such leaders may even step down when the party members transgress and break the law.

The campaign period is two weeks from April 20 to May 4. There are 13.268 million eligible voters. RM400 million has been allocated for the management of the election by more than 240,000 election workers. Thirteen million is a critical mass -- almost a third of the total population.

It is all right to be emotional but citizens must not lose common sense, decency, and goodwill and must not be obsessed and blinded by loyalty to individuals or party and in the process, act in dangerous ways that put national interest at risk.

The campaigning period best practices, election day best practices and post-election audits will be the measures by which Malaysia can be proud of its democratic practices or otherwise. All the efforts spent by the official media and other media

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pertaining to the 13th General Election should make Malaysians more democratically and legally literate.

There is no reason the general election could not also place Malaysia as a country with one of the best practices of above board, honourable election processes, adhering to the rule of the law and code of conduct becoming of a democratic, fair society with basic decency.

Around the world, especially from developed nations, as well as from large democracies like India and Indonesia, there are many best practices.

The Election Commission had adopted many of them. While the existing practices may not be acceptable to all, as for now, the election will still be run and the practical thing to do is make the best of existing policies and practices.

If there are contentions, the concerned parties should collect enough convincing evidence, including legal evidence, to advocate for improvements in the future.

All kinds of stakeholders, leaders, party workers, media personnel, Election Commission officers and representatives, invited observers, police and other special units security personnel will be working to ensure the smooth running of the election. Come the morning of May 6, there will be many tears shed for joy and disappointment. Life must go on after the GE13. There is much work to be done immediately. So time must not be wasted in further dissent after the election.

Many who will be elected this time may not be around for the 2018 GE14, with the privilege to lead, until and beyond 2023. As society is developed with a sense of urgency, immediately after the election, the next five years must see new and inspiring concepts for the next stage of development.

The mindsets of new leaders must be the readiness to get on with their responsibilities for the next five years beginning May 6 and 260 weeks after. First thing first, clean up all the national and election mess everywhere, and make sure that Malaysia is clean and beautiful, literally, metaphorically and narratively.



Political party flags and banners, like these in Jalan Ayer Merbau, Merlimau, Malacca, are a common sight nationwide as the general election nears.

<1 / 1 >

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