Bersih's impact on GE13

By Khoo Ying Hooi, Guest Contributor
– 15 May 2013
Posted in: GE13 Malaysia, Malaysia

Anwar Ibrahim called for rallies nationwide signalling the beginning of a 'movement' to protest alleged electoral fraud at the 5 May polls. Bersih has backed Anwar’s claims that foul play was at hand. In a press statement released on 5 May, 2013, Bersih (Clean/Movement for free and fair elections) alerted that preliminary observations show that there were many irregularities on polling day. In Sunday’s polls, videos and photos of alleged dubious voters flooded onto social media, along with photos of people showing that their indelible ink was ‘easily washed off. The 13th general election concluded with hundreds of complaints of polling irregularities.

Bersih announced on the day after the polls that a people’s tribunal would be set up to probe electoral fraud. Given the extensive media attention on electoral irregularity during the election, the impact of Bersih needs consideration. The movement had a tremendous impact on the political establishment by encouraging active political participation by Malaysians, which transcended the usual ethnic and class divide. Pakatan Rakyat has benefited the most from the Bersih movement on polling day. In Sunday’s polls, videos and photos of alleged dubious voters flooded onto social media, along with photos of people showing that their indelible ink was easily washed off. The 13th general election concluded with hundreds of complaints of polling irregularities.

Since its formal establishment in 2006, the Bersih movement has proven that it is more than just a collection of people pushing for electoral reforms. Its popularity made it into an important social force in Malaysia. It has contributed to a greatly increased level of political awareness especially among young voters. Furthermore, campaigns such as “Jom 100” that encouraged citizens to vote, and “Jom Pantau” campaign that advocated citizens to observe as polling observers, triggered more active participation in the electoral process from the citizenry.

Bersih is widely considered a pioneer in advocating for electoral observers for the 13th general election. Although Bersih itself was not appointed by the Election Commission (EC) to be one of the electoral observer groups, the EC did invite selected domestic non-governmental organisations and observers from ASEAN to observe Malaysia’s 13th general elections.
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Khoo Ying Hooi is a fellow in the Department of International and Strategic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in University of Malaya. She is also a PhD candidate at University Putra Malaysia, where she examines the impact of the Bersih movement on political change in Malaysia.

About Khoo Ying Hooi, Guest Contributor

3 Comments

1. #1
   Reply
   Charles Edward Frith (@charlesfrith)
   Posted May 15, 2013 at 6:05 PM
   All of the people I respect tell me that Anwar Ibrahim like Thaksin is a globalist asset. A person who will sell Malaysia to the highest bidder in order to secure power.
   Quality comment or not? 6

2. #2
   Reply
   Greg Lopez
   Posted May 16, 2013 at 3:01 AM
   Hi Charles,
   Could you name some of these people that you respect who has said this, so that New Mandala readers can judge for themselves.
   Thanks
   Quality comment or not? 0

3. #3
   Reply
   Future Malaysian
   Posted May 16, 2013 at 4:28 PM
   “the critical question remains whether Bersih’s concerted efforts will actually bring some, if any institutional reform to Malaysia’s electoral system and process.”
   There can be no question about the pivotal role Bersih has played in the awakening of the political consciousness and role that responsible and everyday Malaysians need to and must play in deciding the political route the country is to take. In concert with the many vocal social and environmental activists NGOs, the combined efforts have paid off in the latest GE result. A result that have and will greatly influence the present and future political landscape of the country.
   Having vigorously stirred and awaken the otherwise apathetic attitude of many Malaysians, especially those of the younger generations, the demand for real institutional reforms in Malaysia’s electoral system and processes remain at the top of the agenda. And if you cannot get the government of
   be...
   Reply: That is nothing compared to what is going on in Phuket where thousands have been put out...

   Eric B.: TVF is overrun by the Royalist foreigner brigade who love the coup and consider Prayuth....
   R. N. England: I should have added the communist cultists to the list of those seriously...
   Jaidee: Enjay, since by your own admission your in the business of signing off on MA Theses for...
   Enjay: Yes, Jaidee, this “brainwashing” meme is certainly a popular one....
   Great expectations
   Reply: As a result poor families were only electrified for a short period.

Of pragmatism and politics
   tocharian: I learnt Burmese history in Burmese in Burma before Thant Myint_U was born (1966 in...
   plan B: This article might appear reasonable to all armchair Myanmar observers as well as the...
   tocharian: Since you are addressing me directly I should set the record straight: I was never a...
   plan B: “The stories that Burmese ex-pat dissidents tell are of course very biased, if not.
   tocharian: “She Man”? That’s a good one! Anyway I agree with you that a lot of...
This book reveals the vibrant political debates that took place in French Indochina in the early twentieth century. The day to reform and change it, you go change the government of the day!

Quality comment or not? 2: 0

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