

## Is it democracy or 'democracy'?

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Comment

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WHEN President-elect Obama picked his once bitter rival Hillary Clinton to be s high-powered Secretary of State, many voiced their reservations.

Why did he do it? Could it be to scure the support of women whom he lost while campaigning against Hillary?

Or could it be he needed someone attend to the hypothetical "3am call" that Hillary claimed that she is been best trained to handle?

Could it be possible that Obama really wants to put an end to the old, tired politics of keeping-your-enemy-at-bay strategy.

After all, he had also decided keep Bush appointee Robert Gates, a Republican, as Defence Secretary, making him the most senior person in the new cabinet.

Or for that matter, ex-Marine general James Jones, who purportedly worked for John McCain, as National Security Adviser. Then there is Bill Richardson, another former presidential contender, who is Commerce Secretary, another powerful position.

Going by the opinion polls, however, Obama is the leader of the "new" politics that he professes.

This is something that many seasoned politicians from the "old" school are not able, or willing, to do.

Under the "old" politics, the winners will make sure the losers "pay" the price, for whatever reason, subtly or otherwise. Often it reflects a kind of "immature" politicking where the losers are deprived of all sorts of things if they are not fired from the party.

Many more are demonised, especially the supporters.

The losers will try to challenge and bring down the winner, doing whatever it takes and causing uncertainties at all levels in the process.

At times, this brings about unrest and violence, making the situation dire and resulting in the loss of lives.

This situation has unfolded many a time around us, being more rampant in the developing countries where democracy is poorly understood.

It has also become a convenient cloak to grab power "undemocratically", spawning fertile opportunities for corruption and other unsavoury practices.

Governing, as a result, hardly takes place, except when it is populist (usually trivial) to do so.

Generally, it is as though electioneering is not yet over, and the campaign for the hearts and minds is the only agenda.

Consequently, the tensions are heightened due to political lobbying and accusations with all sorts of propaganda churned out.

The blogosphere is notoriously well into this, blurring the thin line between what is true and false.

Even in Parliament, the trend is not quite right with vulgarity and lewd comments meant to kill the messenger rather than the message.

Name-calling and demanding for apologies are standard routines when elected members try to outdo one another for the TV cameras, their contributions more volume and gestures than substance and in-depth articulation.

Then, of course, there is the inevitable finger-pointing all round as though each party is consumed with guilt that it is almost confessional to cast blame on others; even when the jury is still out on what the root causes are.

Seemingly, it is better to accuse first, rather than be accused later, as a kind of forward defence mechanism to mitigate whatever skeletons are to be found in the cupboard at some point in time.

Better still if it scores some badly needed points to advance one's political interest.

It does not matter if hundreds of people desperately need solutions or help, as in the case of the tragic landslide at Bukit Antarabangsa.

Some say that this is a necessary "evil" for democracy to grow.

With another by-election due, it would be interesting to gauge whether there will be an indication that our democracy has indeed developed over the past year.

Otherwise, we will have to settle for our own version of a rather infantile democracy, at times bordering on "demon-crazy" in the way we heckle and demonise others just to get our point of view across. It is a sad state of affairs for a nation that aspires to attain developed status in a little more than a decade from now.

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