

It's time to cast your vote for the thinking Yang Berhormat

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THE 2004 election is a "thinking election", according to Royal Professor Ungku Aziz (*Sunday Mail*, March 14) and his assessment is both frank and fair.

Not only is the election in the new millenium, but it is also the first for a new leadership seeking a fresh mandate.

Since taking over the country's top job, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has set Malaysians on a new thinking path towards change and openness. Someone likened the initiatives taken thus far as opening up windows when he steps into a room.

By now Malaysians are attuned to some important post-election changes as expected with the new era.

Starting with the declaration "work with me, not for me", and articulating the need to create a new mindset beyond excellence, he has challenged many to think "out of the box".

After all, the changes sought are intangible and value-based (such as integrity, transparency, servant-leadership), and not merely materialistic.

It, therefore, demands a greater thinking power (relative to mere greed-and-grab power) to arrive at landmark decisions for the nation.

To have a thinking election, though, implies that there need to be a "thinking" electorate as well. This is yet another point to belabour.

All too often, the word "thinking" has been bandied about mainly to schoolchildren and students, never mind if the rest of the community is non-thinking.

Hence, schools and universities are bombarded with the suggestions to teach thinking skills.

It, of course, begs the question: if this is not the Case, then what do we make of the majority of the electorate who in most likelihood received their education from local schools and/or universities? Unthinking voters?

The stakes are further raised if the same question is posed to the hundreds of hopefuls who are fielded for the election, many of whom were also educated locally at some point in their early life.

The same goes for a good majority of the politicians themselves. Do they suffer from the same syndrome?

Of course, there are people who would like to believe that those educated during a certain period, say the 1960s according to one deputy minister from a lesser ministry recently, are better off.

At least it was claimed that they speak better English, although this says little about their ability to think. Regardless, they take pride in making unthinkingly generalised statement to drive home a point.

This raises another unthinkable spectre. Unthinking elected representatives, voted in by an unthinking electorate? Heaven forbid!

So what has become of a "thinking" election?

Well, just because a few are keen to exhibit their unthinking styles and prejudices it does not mar the overall electoral outcome.

More so when this time around, there are many fresh young faces selected to contest in the 2004 election; and many of them are professionals including religious and academic scholars (read: thinkers). Most probably they will overwhelm the non-thinking few.

One is thus optimistic that the voters will be putting on their thinking caps in exercising their democratic rights today. After all, they have been warned to watch out for those who go about pretending to serve the people (*turun ke bawah, tangan kosong*).

This is something the people could easily discern especially when the *tangan kosong* is compounded by *kepala kosong* (unthinking).

Don't we know the type. No action, but plenty of hot air. So let us be on guard.

The bet is on the rank of professionals and scholars, new and old, who would make a difference.

By virtue of their training they are endowed to think, particularly in their areas of expertise.

Thus they are hopefully focused, principled, and not distracted in executing their humble role as servants of the people.

As professionals and scholars they should be information-rich and resourceful to be able to come up with new ideas for new solutions to solve long-standing problems.

In short, we need less the *YB* types who are quick to cling on to their status as *Yang Berhormat* and more than ever we need the other type of *YB*, *the Yang Berfikir!*

Yes, if is a vote for the Yang Berhormat *yang berfikir!*

This is one change that many would want to see in the 2004 election.

Because, it would mean that Parliament will be transformed from the arena of "senseless shouting matches" to one of solemn and sober consensus-building deliberations worthy of a nation of thinkers!

No more time wasting, name calling or personal attacks.

At least not from parliamentarians who now must think how to practise good followership (*Weekend Guest*, Feb 22), working "with" each other for maximum national benefit.

In short we are looking forward to a thinking Parliament and State Assemblies that are mandated to seriously dwell on shaping the future of the nation.

For this to happen, it is imperative that today we begin by ensuring that this election and future ones are "thinking" elections.

Malaysians must not be laidback and take things for granted, just because we have had it good all this while.

Exercise your right to vote for your one vote can make a difference to this beloved country.

One shares Pak Engku optimism when he said: "We are actually on the threshold of change for the better."

This is one chance that must not be squandered by patriotic Malaysians who are eligible to cast their ballot today.

Wishing you happy voting, but first put on your thinking cap.

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