There have been many reckless remarks by the opposition parties led by the Rally for Democracy and Progress, RDP, over the past few weeks with regard to the upcoming by-election in Okahandja Constituency, due to be held on February 24, 2010.

RDP is leading the pack in this orchestrated campaign to tarnish the image of the Electoral Commission of Namibia, ECN, and render it, in its present form, unfit to preside over and conduct not only the upcoming by-election in Okahandja, but also future elections.

True, the system must be beyond suspicion. In fact, it should not just be beyond suspicion, it must be seen to be beyond suspicion. That onus lies with the ECN. To all intents and purposes, it has done its best, under difficult and trying circumstances.

No system is 100 percent perfect. No election anywhere in the world will ever be without a single fault. The election of former US President, George Bush, was marred in controversy, and the Federal Court had to intervene to pronounce the winner; amid biting questions by ordinary voters.

Had that taken place in an African country, European Union observers were going to be quick to pronounce such elections as having been “not free and fair.” But America is America. And everything goes, cut and measured according to American standards. So much for democracy!

Namibians have, over the years, organized and conducted impeccable and transparent elections since independence in 1990, far more transparent than those that brought George Bush in the White House. That track record of transparency has never been broken. And it is not about to, now.

While the onus of ensuring free and fair elections lies with the ECN, political parties taking part in such elections are under obligations to raise tangible and substantial issues which are materially likely to influence the outcome of the elections.

Recently, RDP claimed that it had “unearthed a number of irregularities” on the voters’ roll of the Okahandja by-election. Among those “irregularities” were 182 double registered voters, 21 triple registered voters, 252 dead people, 10 cases of people appearing twice but with different identity documents and sworn statements, 27 incorrectly gender marked cases and so on.

“They have submitted the above mentioned irregularities to the Magistrate of Okahandja by-election. Among those “irregularities” were 182 double registered voters, 21 triple registered voters, 252 dead people, 10 cases of people appearing twice but with different identity documents and sworn statements, 27 incorrectly gender marked cases and so on.

“We have submitted the above mentioned irregularities to the Magistrate of Okahandja by-election. The 29 January 2010 as per the ECN deadline,” said RDP’s Nghiningilwandubo Kashume.

Well, it is up to the learned Magistrate to decide and I leave that in the hands of that learned Magistrate to apply his/her minds on such claims. But for Kashume to tell the media all such craps without showing us how they could, in one way or another, substantially influence and swing the outcome of the elections in favour of this or that party, raises more fundamental questions than answers.

For goodness sake, how on earth will 252 dead people ever vote? How will 182 double registered voters ever vote twice? There is no way a person can vote twice. It is just not possible. The system is too tight to let through such things.

Even in RDP’s affidavits before the High Court on last year’s National Assembly and Presidential elections, there are no cases of people having voted twice. And how will the “27 incorrectly gender marked cases” affect RDP’s performance in such an election?

To cite such administrative errors as attempts by the ECN to “rig the elections” is as ridiculous as it is laughable. To be frank, such claims, new and old, are nothing but cheap smokescreens to hide RDP’s two real intentions, follow-up performance in such an election?

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