

Malays okay with 'humble' Guan Eng, but not DAP
Malaysiakini.com
November 17, 2011
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A survey of Malay voters in Penang found that despite their respect for Penang chief minister and DAP secretary general Lim Guan Eng, they still harbour the feeling that his government is sidelining their community.

The October polling of 720 Malay voters by pollster Ilham Centre found that "media indoctrination" of labelling the Penang government as a "Chinese government" had succeeded.

"Almost 30 percent of the respondents viewed Lim as well-known and respected, but were convinced that the Penang government is a Chinese government.

"They do not view the government from a Pakatan Rakyat point of view but through the DAP which they are convinced is Chinese chauvinist," it said.

Some 51.9 percent of respondents also told Ilham that they feel that "DAP's and chief minister's cronyism", influences their decision.

From in-depth interviews of voters in Tasek Gelugor and Kepala Batas parliamentary constituencies and Bayan Lepas state constituency, Ilham found that this was different to the previously Gerakan-led government.

"Malays did not see Penang as having been governed by Chinese but as being led by the BN," it said in its report.

The island state's chief minister under the BN then was Gerakan president Koh Tsu Koon, who is also Chinese.

Indian Muslims in Umno a concern

The report added that the state government's image does not reflect that of multiracial Pakatan Rakyat, despite Malay PKR leader Mansor Othman holding the deputy chief minister's post.

It added that the resignation and defection of former deputy chief minister Mohammad Fairus Khairuddin had also contributed to projecting the Penang government as "anti-Malay".

The survey found that a majority of those aged 40 and above would favour Umno-BN as they feel the party and the coalition are their best bets to secure the future of the community.

"The Penang Malays feel sidelined from development. The Chinese are seen as dominant in the economy. The Mamak (Indian Muslim) community is also frequently compared to Malays in terms of wealth," it said.

The presence of Indian Muslim representatives in Umno also contribute to "scepticism" among Malay voters as to Umno's role in advancing the community, but this does not tide them over to Pakatan.

"Is PAS a Malay champion? No. Penang PAS makes no inroads into the hearts and minds of Penang Malays," it found.

55 percent of the respondents said their view that "PAS is the DAP's puppet" influences their vote, followed by issues of racism and what they see as the denial of their "special rights as Malays".

PKR does not fare better among Malay voters surveyed, with the party's multiracial approach seen as a

failure to protect their interests.

Anwar's influence limited

Penang-born PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim's influence in Penang was also seen to be limited to only a few areas, including his constituency of Permatang Pauh.

About 3 percent of respondents felt that Malay NGOs like the Malay Chamber of Commerce as doing a better job of protecting Malay interests while 1.1 percent named NGO Perkasa as a Malay champion.

Among issues leading to Malay disenchantment is real estate, with the community finding themselves priced out of the market and pushed to buy on the outskirts of major urban centres.

Happily for Pakatan, however, the survey finds that those aged under 40 are still on the fence and are "rational and open in judging the state government and Lim's leadership".

This is despite the fact that they face great challenges in surviving in Penang today, in terms of career advancement, education and coping with the cost of living, the report said.

About a third of the respondents also felt that the Penang economy is better under the governance of DAP and Pakatan Rakyat.

81.1 percent said they do not want a corrupt candidate while 71.9 percent want local candidates to be fielded.