

Podcast: BN has lost middle Malaysia, says MP
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In the seventh 'Middle Malaysia' podcast, media consultant Oon Yeoh speaks to Liew Chin Tong, first-term MP for Bukit Bendera and a key political strategist for DAP.

He laments the fact that there is no committee system in Parliament - unlike in Australia, Britain, New Zealand and even Indonesia. It is through committees that parliamentarians develop subject matter expertise, he explains.

sibu forum penang 260510 liew chin tongLiew (left) also talks about the nature of the British parliamentary system, upon which we had based ours, and how it does not allow for much dissent within political parties, thus leading to parliament becoming like a rubber stamp as policies are not seriously debated.

That would change if a committee system were implemented, he says. However, he adds that it won't come about unless Pakatan Rakyat gets into power.

Liew, who has a clear grasp of electoral statistics, says that between 1991 and 2005, BN had the support of all the communities, including the middle-class Chinese.

"BN has lost its Middle Malaysia position," Liew says, adding that the most extreme party today is the one led by Prime Minister Najib Razak, with Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia and ultra-Malay group Perkasa cheering him on.

Pakatan needs make inroads

The force that would counter this is the Internet, according to Liew, who highlights the fact that demographically speaking, "we are an extremely young country", with more than 50 percent below the age of 25 and 70 percent below the age of 40.

The young ones, who love to use Facebook and going online for information, is what will make a difference, he says.

Looking back at his own political career, Liew says he considers himself lucky to be able to live in an era where change is happening and where he can contribute to that change.

He expects the general elections to be held in June and says that for Pakatan to win, it needs to win one-third of seats in the so-called BN 'fixed deposit' states of Sabah, Sarawak, Johor and Pahang, which has a total of 95 seats.

Of that lot, Pakatan had won only five in the last general elections. So, there is a lot of room for improvement. To win one-third, Liew contends, is very doable.

