An urban tsunami - what now for BN?
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COMMENT The BN emerged victorious after a most gruelling fight at the 13th general election.

Najib Abdul Razak, who at the time of writing having surpassed a simple majority of 112 seats, finally has his own mandate.

In the next couple of weeks, a lot of analyses will be made and a lot of soul-searching done as the battered BN wrestles with the huge urban swing to Pakatan Rakyat.

NONENajib (left) is calling it a "Chinese tsunami" but the reality goes beyond merely Chinese disenchantment. It is a swing away from the BN's race-based formula in the cities.

Pakatan continues to bite at the BN's heels. It has convincingly denied the BN its customary two-thirds majority, and made inroads into bastions Johor and Sabah. It continues to make inroads into fortress Sarawak. It is time that the BN begin to accept the reality that the days of a strong government and of strongmen are now over.

There were moments when many of us allowed ourselves to be carried away by unofficial reports that Pakatan was surging towards a victory. But the reality is that the odds were always stacked against the opposition coalition.

There was not really much hope of winning against the entrenched BN and against a machinery of money, power and all other instruments of incumbency at their disposal. But overdoing things like the never-ending dinners in Penang can drive voters away.

Plying the race card

Some impressive gains were made. Two BN ministers were defeated and two ex-chief ministers toppled. Ali Rustam, Umno's rising star, fell in Malacca whilst Abdul Ghani Othman lost decisively in Johor.

NONERaja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin (right) and Kong Cho Ha were also defeated. MIC's G Palanivel, MCA's Liow Tiong Lai and Chua Tee Yong survived by a

hair’s breath.

Unfortunately, BN’s Saifuddin Abdullah was also defeated in Temerloh but Khairy Jamaluddin won big. Both represent the liberal side of Umno. Mukhriz Mahathir will now be the menteri besar of Kedah whilst BN will rule in Terengganu and Perak, both by very small majorities.

NONEPenang and Selangor, both the most urbanised states, remain with Pakatan. In all urban areas, Pakatan has won decisively. BN will now call their electoral victory a narrow win for race and religion. Only when the dust has settled will we know for sure if this claim is true.

So what will now happen to the BN? This is the most important question. Umno has demonstrated that it can go it alone and win federal power without MCA, MIC and Gerakan. It is, however, much weakened and will have to be more even-handed when it comes to dealing with its East Malaysian partners.

Umno will try to play the race card here. The Chinese have visibly rejected the BN formula but it must also remember that the voting trends in GE13 reveals a far more alarming situation where the BN was roundly rejected in all urban areas. I will not be too surprised if it hangs on to power without a majority popular mandate.

New mission

So, at the time of writing, it is very clear that the BN has lost in the cities. At a rate of 70 percent of the population living in urban areas, the ruling coalition will have a lot of soul-searching to do. Can it really move forward and rule effectively without the urban electorate?

NONEWhat about the power-sharing formula? The MCA president said that the party will respect the electorate’s wishes and will not participate in forming the cabinet. MIC is left with a president who won with a razor-thin majority. The BN government will now have to feature a largely one ethnic group cabinet.

No matter what happens, Malaysians must now put the electoral results behind us and try to look forward. It is time for national reconciliation. For those who have won should do as much soul-searching as those who have lost.

It is important that we do not lose faith in face of the outcome of the polls. Yes, the ink was not foolproof. Yes, there were some suspicious voters. Yes, the electricity went out and new ballot boxes appeared.

But look at the results carefully. Despite everything thrown at the opposition, Malaysians have now a new mission. Pakatan won in urban Malaysia. It won in parliamentary constituencies of over 100,000 voters compared to Putrajaya's 16,000!

NONEBut BN won equally convincingly in rural Malaysia. Some form of national reconciliation must now take place.

A challenge will now present itself to the ruling class. A fellowship has been forged in the cities that will result in five years of super scrutiny of every piece of legislation, every action and every decision. But for now, for today, let's be thankful for a peaceful Malaysia.

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