

The beginnings of a Malay tsunami

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By Gertrude Pereira

COMMENT In Viewpoints on NTV7 on Monday night, Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin appealed to the opposition to be magnanimous and accept the GE13 results. I wonder if he would ask his party, Umno, and the Barisan Nasional it leads, to do the same.

NONE

Instead, one day after the elections, after Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had said he would seek national reconciliation and healing, Umno-owned Malay daily, Utusan Malaysia headlines 'Apa lagi Cina mahu?' (What more do the Chinese want?) When his attention was drawn to it, Najib defended the paper, alluding that Chinese papers do the same.

Now, tell me who is stoking racialism in post-GE13 Malaysia and who is not being magnanimous? Apparently the Chinese voted en bloc for Pakatan Rakyat in predominantly Chinese areas where the DAP is strong.

It really shouldn't come as a surprise that they voted overwhelmingly for the DAP because the Chinese vote has always been split between the MCA and the DAP. In some elections they swing to the DAP and in others they swing to the MCA.

In the GE13, there was a big swing to the DAP. The point to note here is that the Chinese delivered the vote to the DAP not because they favoured the party. They were merely throwing their full support to Pakatan to register their backing for a two-party democratic system.

History-making voter turnout

That is the main message that the electorate has made in the GE13. An 84.84 percent voter turnout as announced by the Election Commission is history-making! Malaysians want to take part in the electoral process because they now have a choice - BN or Pakatan.

The Chinese vote simply mirrored the urban Malay vote. One has only to look at Selangor to see how the urban Malays voted. Pakatan won 44 of the 56 seats in Selangor, sweeping more than a two-thirds majority. Pakatan won the highest number of parliamentary seats in Selangor, 17 in total with nine going to Parti

Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) and four each to PAS and DAP.

NONE of the state seats, PAS won 15, DAP 15 and PKR 14. It would seem as if PAS has a strong showing in Selangor. But that, really, may not be the case. In most of the state seats where PAS and PKR were fielded, it was a straight fight between either of them and BN and the former won. These are mostly seats with a Malay majority and the Malays voted for the opposition party and with a clear majority.

If PKR had been fielded in those seats which PAS won, I believe the results would have been the same. If the urban Malays were voting for the party, they would have voted for PAS in Kota Damansara which was a six-cornered fight between three independents, PKR, PAS and BN. PAS only got 7,312 votes against PKR's 14,860. PAS split the votes and the BN candidate won.

In the GE13, people - except BN supporters - were not voting for any side; they were voting for the legitimacy of a two-party system.

In Selangor, urban Malays sent the message that they would give PR the chance to rule. In Malay-majority areas, it did not matter whether it was PAS or PKR who was the candidate; they voted for PR, an alternative to the BN and which governed Selangor with top ratings.

Reading the signs on the ground

The Chinese read the signs on the ground correctly and threw in their lot to register their support. True, the BN government gave the Chinese many concessions, but it did the same to Malays and other Malaysians as well. And like others, the Chinese and the urban Malays both chose to turn their back to the BN. So, you can't feel played out by one group and not the other.

According to the EC, PKR won 2,254,328 votes for the parliamentary seats, DAP, 1,736,267 and PAS 1,633,389 making a total of 5,623,984 for PR against BN's 5,237,699. PKR delivered the most votes to Pakatan even though it won only 30 parliamentary seats as against DAP's 38 and PAS' 21.

It is very clear that the urban Malay vote went to PKR and that is the most important message of this election: urban Malays have given the PKR the mandate to lead the change through Pakatan. And the Chinese are following suit.

If you ask me, I think this is just the beginnings of a Malay tsunami!

If BN does not recognise it and refuses to be magnanimous about levelling the

political playing field, it will lose even more in future elections because more and more Malays will see its reluctance as its desire to hold on to power - at whatever costs, no matter how unacceptable to the electorate.

If BN respects the urban Malay vote, it will begin to set in place the proper protocols to ensure a clean and transparent electoral process and engage in a fair fight in the next elections and not resort to desperate acts to shore up its support at the hands of defeat.

azlanIf it is serious about reconciliation and healing, then be magnanimous. Clean up the electoral roll, reform postal balloting, provide free and fair access to the media, clearly indicate that the next elections will be on a level playing field and call for GE14 earlier rather than later. And keep it clean.

By doing so, even if Najib becomes unpopular, he will go down in history as a true reformist prime minister.

Meanwhile, PKR should begin to feel confident as a result of the support the urban Malays have given it.

PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim should forget about the past, take the court cases in his stride, forget about being beholden to long-time loyalties, stop the infighting and turn PKR into a party progressive Malays will want to identify with and begin to reach out to a wider Malay base to position itself as the leading party in Pakatan, taking into consideration Chinese and especially Indian interests. The DAP is its safe deposit but it has to start winning over Indian support.

At the same time, PKR should also form alliances with East Malaysian parties and make further inroads there. Who knows, building on the groundswell of support it has received from the GE13, it may well be leading a Malay/bumiputra (including East Malaysians) tsunami that will change Malaysia for good!

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