

## **Economist: Najib's win tainted by skewed polls**

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**By Nigel Aw**

Leading international affairs weekly The Economist has described Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's win in the 13th general election as a tawdry victory which brought to fore a system skewed towards the BN.

It stated that with the "huge inbuilt advantages" skewed in the ruling coalition's favour, it was "remarkable" that the coalition still had to indulge in vote-buying.

"The state has dispensed cash handouts and other goodies, while much of the civil service works as a party-political tool, and the election commission has long brushed aside allegations of malfeasance.

"Add in an obsequious mainstream media, and it is rather remarkable that so many Barisan Nasional campaigners still felt the need to resort to blatant vote-buying," it said today in its website.

In its worst performance in history, the BN only garnered 47 percent of the popular vote compared with Pakatan Rakyat's 51 percent but was still able to win 60 percent of the parliamentary seats.

"It is further evidence of how the electoral system is skewed in BN's favour, allowing it to stack up seats in rural Malay heartlands with far fewer voters than Pakatan needs to win seats in more urban areas," it said.

'Najib's divisive campaign'

On top of allegations of 'phantom voters', the weekly also noted that Najib (below) had presided over a campaign that was "as negative, racially divisive and pro-Malay as ever" by Umno.

It also described the prime minister as "unwise" for attributing BN's heavy losses to a "Chinese Tsunami" thus encouraging anti-Chinese headlines in the Malay-language dailies.

"Casting the election in such racial terms is neither wise nor accurate.

"The tsunami washing over BN is of the young and the rising urban middle class, sickened at the unfairness, cronyism and corruption they see around them," it said.

It adds that Najib only had Umno to blame for alienating non-Malay voters due to its "nasty and divisive" campaign, especially in the Malay heartland.

"Despite professing to promote a multi-ethnic Malaysia, Barisan's election strategy has left the country more divided than ever, both along ethnic lines and between urban and rural areas."

'Anwar's GE fraud allegations exaggerated'

While noting that preliminary independent monitors had found allegations of fraud to be "damning", it said that opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's allegations of fraud were "almost certainly an exaggeration".

NONE"Still, the bitterness engendered by the vote will persist. 'National reconciliation' which Najib sees as the way to heal the wounds, looks a way off," the report said.

For Najib's political survival, the weekly said the premier must capitalise on his popularity over his own party to reform more boldly than before.

"...to complete the demolition of the affirmative-action edifice; to go further in improving civil liberties; and, above all, to make the electoral system fairer," it added.

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