

Indians, too, backed Pakatan in GE13

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ANALYSIS In the recently concluded GE13, we have witnessed quite an obvious trend of the Chinese predominantly voting for the federal opposition Pakatan Rakyat. The Malays on the other hand had been generally supportive of the ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN), barring a few states like Selangor, Kelantan and Terengganu.

There has been very little mentioned about the Indian voting trend. Therefore this article is intended to shed some light into how the Indians voted, taking into account the local demographics of the various constituencies.

During the build up towards GE13, there had been a lot of chest thumping by Barisan Nasional, particularly by the MIC leadership, that the Indian support had returned to pre-2008 levels. It had been speculated that the community's anger towards the BN government following the Hindraf-instigated 2007 protest and the subsequent ISA crackdown of its key leaders had subsided following the overtures made by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

NONEThe community had also felt letdown by some Pakatan Rakyat state governments - particularly noted was the disillusionment towards the PAS-led Kedah state government for failing to honour its promise to declare Thaipusam a state holiday, along with the failure of its state executive councillor S Manikumar (left) in managing a lot of issues concerning the Indian community residing mainly in the southern tip of the rice bowl state.

The community was however noted to be generally very pleased with the performance of the DAP-led Penang and PKR-led Selangor state governments - particularly in relation to the land issues plaguing the temples and Tamil schools, and state employment opportunities for the Indians.

In the days approaching GE13, Najib appeared to have pulled off a coup when P Waythamoorthy, leader of one of the many factions of the fractured 2007 Hindraf movement, signed a memorandum of understanding with his government and subsequently urged the Indian community to return BN to the parliament with a two-thirds majority.

The effect of this development was quite difficult to be interpreted as there was immediate disapproval from previous Hindraf associates including from none other

than Waythamoorthy's own brother P Uthayakumar, who in the eyes of many among the Indian community is still the de facto leader of Hindraf.

There were strong nationwide protests against Waythamoorthy for this perceived betrayal in inking a deal with the Umno-led BN government and this, along with the candidature of Zulkifli Noordin representing BN in the Shah Alam parliamentary constituency after having only recently insulted Hindus and Indians over video recordings, didn't bode very well on paper for the BN with regard to Indian support.

How MIC fared

So how did the Indians actually vote at the end? To understand this, let us first look at how MIC fared. In contesting nine parliamentary seats and 18 state seats, it only won four parliament and five state seats, immediately already indicating an abysmal result and poor Indian support for its candidates.

In the five parliament seats it lost (Sungai Siput, Kapar, Subang, Teluk Kemang, Kota Raja), they were predominantly urban Malay majority seats and this means MIC cannot blame the poor Chinese support for BN as a cause for its defeat.

In fact it's well known that the BN had on average between 60-80 percent of the Malay electorate support for the coalition in GE13 and this therefore indicates that the Indians in urban constituencies had ditched MIC in droves. The Indian support swing towards Pakatan was so strong that even the Malay electorate couldn't rescue MIC in these constituencies, a fact acknowledged by MIC secretary-general T Murugesan.

For example, in the Kota Raja parliamentary constituency which has 44 percent Malays, 29 percent Indians and 25 percent Chinese - the PAS candidate won by a thumping 29,395 majority, with a vote share of 64 percent of the turnout.

Assuming at best 45-50 percent Malay and 80-90 percent Chinese support for Pakatan, it will still require about 75 percent support from the Indian community to secure the above given majority, and this support proportion was found to be roughly applicable across the other four parliamentary seats where MIC had been soundly defeated.

Nevertheless, MIC, whilst acknowledging poor Indian backing in urban areas, is still in denial with regard to Indian support in the rural areas. They have used the slim victories in Cameron Highlands, Segamat, Hulu Selangor and Tapah to argue their case.

However, a closer look at these constituencies paints a different picture altogether. First of all, these seats had only between 10-14 percent Indian electorate, as compared to the likes of Kota Raja with 29 percent Indians, Sungai Siput with 21 percent Indians and Teluk Kemang with again 21 percent Indians.

Secondly, when analysing the voting streams, the Indian majority streams had actually voted for Pakatan. For example Indian predominant voting streams in Cameron Highlands like Ladang Sungai Palas, Ladang Blue Valley and Kampung Raja was won comfortably by DAP's M Manogaran (right) with Indian support approximately about 65 percent for DAP.

Finally, there was a unique factor in each of these constituencies which ensured MIC victory. In Cameron Highlands and Tapah, the presence of 20-30 percent of Orang Asli, a well-known fixed deposit vote bank for the BN, had negated the gain from the Indian support for the Pakatan candidate.

In Hulu Selangor and Segamat, the BN had another form of fixed deposit vote bank - a large Felda electorate to rely upon to ensure MIC victory, with up to 90-95 percent of vote share for BN noted in Felda voting streams.

To further illustrate that the Indians had ditched BN in GE13 regardless whether it was rural or urban localities, we can use the rural Kedah state seat of Lunas as an example - won by PKR with a huge majority of 9,084. The constituency has an electorate breakdown of 46 percent Malays, 28 percent Chinese and 25 percent Indians.

BN, which recaptured Kedah, boasts about 55-60 percent Malay support in that state based on neighbouring state seats statistics. If this is applied, Pakatan would have received 40-45 percent Malay support, along with roughly 80-85 percent Chinese support.

Therefore for the PKR candidate to have won this seat with such majority, Indian support about 75-80 percent would have been required, again dispelling claims that rural Indian support had waned for Pakatan. The same argument can also be applied for other rural/semi-urban 'Indian' seats where the MIC had been decimated, namely Bukit Selambau (Kedah), Sabai (Pahang), Hutan Melintang (Perak) and Ijok (Selangor).

Pakatan Indian candidates fare extremely well

Pakatan Indian candidates fared extremely well in GE13, with solid support from the Indian electorate. A total of eight Indian MPs and 18 state assemblypersons

have been elected from the Pakatan side of the divide, compared to the four Indian MPs and five assemblypersons from BN.

Some of the constituencies with the highest Indian electorates in the country like Prai (36 percent), Seri Andalas (35 percent) and Buntong (48 percent) witnessed massive victories for Pakatan candidates. Prof P Ramasamy, the deputy chief minister II (DCM II) of Penang representing DAP, secured a whopping 78 percent of the votes cast in his Prai constituency while his rival L Krishnan of MIC was only about 900 votes away from losing his deposit.

NONEXavier Jayakumar (left), the former Selangor exco member, won by a whopping 15,633 majority in Seri Andalas, smashing his BN rival, MIC's Youth chief T Mohan. In both these constituencies, analysis of the Indian majority streams indicate Indian support to be anywhere between 70-80 percent for Pakatan to secure such vast majorities.

Therefore this analysis estimates that the Indian support in urban areas for Pakatan to be between 70-80 percent and in rural areas to be between 60-70 percent. MIC's far and few victories were due to either Malay Felda settler's or Orang Asli's strong backing for the BN - the last remaining bastion of BN support.

The BN, and MIC in particular, had again failed to muster the Indian electorate's support, faring even worse than in 2008. Their earlier false belief that the Indian support had returned to the BN after witnessing a reduction in open agitation by the community, was clearly dispelled based on the GE13 results. The Indian electorate had come out in force and voted for Pakatan, matching approximately that of 2008 elections.

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