

'Malaysian seats' are the future of DAP and Pakatan
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COMMENT In the 13th general election (GE13), DAP achieved its best ever electoral results by winning 38 parliamentary seats and 95 state assembly seats out of the 51 parliamentary and 103 state seats contested, becoming the second biggest party after Umno in terms of seats in the new parliamentary term.

After GE13, Utusan Malaysia, the mouthpiece of Umno, immediately pinned the blame for Najib Abdul Razak's electoral disaster on the Chinese, accusing the Chinese voters of causing the political tsunami that saw BN being rejected in terms of popular votes. In the process, MCA and the other non-Malay BN component parties suffered major defeats.

Utusan's intention was to link BN's poor electoral results with racial conflict arguments and provoke racial protests to divert the attention away from people's rejection and aversion of Umno.

"Apa lagi Cina mahu" (What more do the Chinese want?) became the prologue to start Umno's ethnic confrontation tricks after GE13. However with news of the impending goods and services tax (GST) implementation, the hasty passing of the Prevention of Crime Act in Parliament and the surfacing of numerous electoral fraud cases during the 13GE, the provocation failed to materialise.

The tried and tested racial card played by Umno, MCA and MIC in the last 50 years has begun to flounder. There are many complex reasons for that, but one of the significant causes for deflecting the racial provocation by BN is the Chinese-based DAP's refusal to fall into BN's race-baiting rhetoric.

DAP has continuously emphasised that it is not a Chinese party and the 'Malaysian Malaysia' slogan is its party creed. However, because in the past many of its elected representatives were Chinese and also it has always concentrated its efforts in Chinese-majority seats, this has left a deep and unshakeable impression upon the Malay community that DAP is a Chinese party. Is that impression justified?

In the recent Teluk Intan by-election, it was widely speculated that local boy Hew Kuan Yew (right) (popularly known as Superman) would have had better winning prospects compared with Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud.

With the seat's ethnic composition of 42 percent Chinese and 38 percent Malay, Hew's fluency in Chinese and Malay and great oratory skills would have been advantageous in broadening the Teluk Intan Chinese voters' support and maintaining the Malay votes won in GE13, thus securing the seat for DAP.

Although DAP leaders recognised this fact, yet in the end they chose to select Dyana as the candidate and not Superman. Why? The reason professed by DAP was it is to further solidify its multiracial party stance, end racial politics and create a new generation of political leaders.

The truth is, this is not the first time DAP had put a Malay or a non-Chinese candidate in a Chinese majority seat. In the GE13, DAP had enlisted 20 Indian candidates, four Malay candidates, five Dayak candidates, one Melanau candidate and one Kadazan candidate to contest at both the parliamentary and state levels, while there were 108 Chinese candidates at both levels as well.

Its multiracial appeal was definitely more obvious compared with the BN's single race parties.

New strategy a fallacy

Many people believed that as DAP is trying a new strategy to expand into non-Chinese seats, by fielding non-Chinese candidates. This is a fallacy.

In its early days DAP had fielded many non-Chinese candidates. In the 1969 general election, its first, DAP fielded nine Malay candidates and two won on its ticket, namely Ibrahim Singgeh and Hassan Ahmad who won in the Tapah Road (Perak) and Si Rusa (Negri Sembilan) state seats respectively.

Subsequently in the 1974 GE Mohd Salleh Nakhoda Itam and Daing Ibrahim Othman won the Guntong and Pasir Puteh state seats in Perak respectively.

In the 1978 GE, DAP fielded a record number of Malay candidates, nine at the parliamentary level and 36 at state level. However only Mohd Salleh Nakhoda Itam won the Guntong state seat.

In the 1990 GE, DAP's Ahmad Nor became the first Malay candidate for the party to win a parliamentary seat, winning the Bayan Baru parliamentary seat in Penang.

In GE13, DAP Malay candidates achieved the best results yet. Zairil Khir Johari won the Bukit Bendera parliamentary seat in Penang, while Mohd Ariff Sabri and Tengku Zulpuri won the Raub parliamentary seat and Mentakab state in Pahang respectively. Ariffin Omar is the senator for DAP representing Penang in the Dewan Negara (Senate).

The GE13 showed a marked trend, with DAP winning almost all parliamentary seats in the country with above 50 percent Chinese majority. The seats with 40 percent Chinese voters composition seem to be the demarcation line, with Raub's 40.33 percent Chinese voters' composition being the lowest of all the seats it won.

The Umno-controlled media went to town touting that GE13's result showed that Chinese

were abandoning the Umno-led BN to incite the Malay community. However they seem to have conveniently glossed over Umno's more obvious and bigger crimes.

Has Umno forgotten that it was because of its selective misinterpretation of the constitution resulting in double standards being applied in many fields that has caused the non-Malays to despise BN? Umno's hand in destroying the impartiality of the judiciary caused non-Malays to desert BN.

There are many other factors which caused non-Malays to desert BN including the growing problem of corruption and cronyism, as well as the fact that Umno has continuously embraced and even promoted rampant racism.

In fact, Sabahans and Sarawakians deserted BN due to Umno's blatant denial of the 18/20 points that was the prerequisite for Sarawak and Sabah to form Malaysia with Malaya and bringing in illegal immigrants as Malaysian citizens in Sabah.

Control over mainstream media

If it wasn't for the government's control over the mainstream media, the Malays would have deserted BN long before the Chinese did. The fact that the majority of the Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) monetary grant recipients are Malay households shows that under Umno's rule, the Malays are getting poorer and poorer. The Malays who have already woken up to this fact have already deserted BN in droves in GE13.

Seen from another angle, though with the GE13 results DAP is now the second largest party in terms of seats, it has also put DAP at a crossroads. To do better than GE13, DAP has to put more effort into seats with 40 percent or less Chinese voters. These seats are the true representation of Malaysia's population composition; in fact they should be known as 'Malaysian seats' and will be the focus of the next general election.

To win in these seats, DAP needs to shelve its image as Chinese-based party that seems to fight mainly for the Chinese community's interest. In other words it needs to get rid of the perception that it is MCA 2.0.

Political commentator Wan Hamidi Hamid in his commentary 'DAP is not MCA 2.0' said that it is not only the Malays who believed the MCA 2.0 fallacy, but even some of the Chinese believed it too. Some Chinese joined the party believing that it is a better version of MCA, that it is the opposition's Chinese counterpart to MCA. Some of them believed that as MCA is unable to help them, DAP is the next best alternative.

If this fallacious impression continues to grow deeper, then the hope of many people to see Malaysia discard the shackles of racial politics will be a long time in coming. For the 51 percent who hoped and voted for change of government in the last GE, it may just be a pipe dream.

According to the 13GE results, there were 43 parliamentary seats with less than 2,000

majority vote (i.e. marginal seats). BN has 30 seats while PR has 13. If 6 percent of the Malays and bumiputera voters swing to Pakatan, then BN will lose 24 of these seats.

Twenty-four seats added to the current 89 seats held by Pakatan, then the coalition will have a simple majority of 113 seats, enough to form federal government.

Evidently that is only a best case scenario; the reality is Pakatan is far from that target yet. To increase that 6 percent Malay and bumiputera swing is something for the Pakatan strategists to crack their brains on.

DAP's decision to field Dyana Sofya in the Teluk Intan by-election is the best way to shed its MCA 2.0 image. In effect, DAP has turned the tables on the traditional racial games played by Umno, MCA and MIC and checkmated them.

To counter the politics of destruction carried out by BN, the only way out is for DAP to continuously cultivate and grow its strength in these 'Malaysian seats'.

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