

Machap: 5% Chinese voters swing to DAP
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About five percent of Chinese voters who had backed the ruling BN coalition in the 2004 general election have swung to the opposition DAP at last Thursday's Machap by-election.

The swing of Chinese voters in a BN stronghold, while not substantial, nevertheless offers hope to the party that it can do better in the next general election, said DAP leader Lim Guan Eng.

"Even though this five percent swing in Chinese vote did not match the much larger swing in Sarawak state elections (in May last year), there is a possibility of a better performance (for DAP) in the urban centres," he said.

The opposition leader conceded that DAP had failed to improve its standing amongst Malay and Indian voters - the extra 167 votes it bagged came from Chinese voters.

This swing - and the reduction in the number of registered voters in the Machap constituency - helped slash the BN's majority by 481 votes.

In his post-mortem of the party's performance, Lim took comfort that the opposition has, for the first time since the 2004 general election, managed to reduce the ruling coalition's winning margin.

The last three by-elections - Terengganu's Kuala Berang, Kelantan's Pengkalan Pasir and Pahang's Batu Talam - saw BN winning with a higher majority. It even wrested the Pengkalan Pasir seat from PAS.

Wan Azizah snubbed

Lim also noted that Malay voters in Machap have shunned opposition parties, to the extent that even PKR supporters hosting an event for PKR president Wan Azizah Wan Ismail in Machap's Melaka Pindah 'betrayed' her.

Apparently, Wan Azizah was not allowed to use the booked venue in the Malay-majority area when she personally turned up for a ceramah two days before the by-election.

"PKR advisor Anwar Ibrahim has repeatedly highlighted this unprecedented personal snub to the party president in ceramah as an indication of the culture of fear, intimidation, gross abuse of government machinery and money perpetrated by BN," said Lim.

Meanwhile, Indian voters were very receptive when opposition leaders led by Lim and PKR's S Nallakaruppan went house-to-house campaigning in the Indian housing estates.

"Indian voters even attended our ceramah in large numbers. However, once MIC president S Samy Vellu made house-to-house visits, the entire mood changed. So influential was their 'Indian god Samy' that Indian voters who were very warm and receptive earlier refused to even return greetings on polling day."

He however added that the Chinese voters' response was warm and genuine.

"Some Machap Baru villagers sporting BN T-shirts even took drinks repeatedly from the MCA stalls to me and other DAP members manning the SRJK (C) Machap Baru polling centre," he added.

Won by a local boy

In the by-election, Barisan Nasional candidate Lai Meng Chong defeated DAP's Liou Chen Kuang with a majority of 4,081 votes.

Local boy Lai, 56, garnered 5,533 votes while Liou, 33, a businessman from Malacca, pocketed 1,452 votes in his second attempt to win the Chinese-dominant state constituency.

A total of 7,142 or 74.35 percent of 9,623 registered voters cast their ballot papers with 166 as spoilt votes.

The seat fell vacant following the death of Poh Ah Tiam on March 15.

Poh, a state executive councillor, from Machap Baru, was the state assemblyman in Machap for three terms. In the last general election in 2004, Poh beat Liou by a majority of 4,562 votes.

Support for DAP in Machap by polling station						
Polling Station	Ethnic breakdown (%)			Percentage vote share of the DAP		
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	2004	2007	Change
Felda Hutan Percha	70.9	24.4	4.8	10.1%	9.6%	-0.5%
Tebong	34.6	19.6	45.7	11.2%	13.7%	2.5%
Kemuning	61.8	3.1	35.1	1.9%	1.1%	-0.8%
Machap Baru	5.1	93.6	1.3	21.6%	36.6%	15.0%
Selok Menggong	97.2	2.5	0.3	6.2%	5.7%	-0.5%
Melaka Pindah	71.2	11.7	17	12.3%	13.5%	1.1%
Machap Umbor	6.8	89.6	3.6	38.1%	38.1%	0.0%
Ayer Pasir	44	36.4	19.7	14.2%	19.5%	5.2%
Overall	38	45	17	17.5%	20.8%	3.3%

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