

Short-term gains may be long-term political loss

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The short-term gains of the victory of the current Perak DAP leadership may turn out to be a long-term political loss for Pakatan Rakyat in the 13th general election, which political pundits are speculating will be held early.

A raw nerve of the Indian community has been touched nationwide and the fury of the marginalised community has once again been rekindled by the defeat of DAP national vice-chairperson M Kulasegaran in the state party elections held on Sunday.

What was supposed to be a normal state party election turned out to be a nationwide affair after the media hyped up the feud between the Ngeh-Nga cousins and the team of Kulasegaran (left) and Pasir Pinji assemblyperson Thomas Su for control of the party in Perak.

Several attempts by the national DAP leaders to douse the flames of political enmity between the two factions failed.

This is despite the Perak DAP elections having been conducted fairly and strictly, with neither faction complaining over the democratic process.

However, public perception, especially among the Indian community which supposedly sees Kulasegaran as the replacement for the late DAP political giant P Pato, is that the former has been "victimised to end his political career" in the Chinese-majority party.

Indians 'resentful'

This belief has been further strengthened by the various mobile calls from concerned quarters, including BN component parties that are Indian-based, NGOs, trade unions and lawyers to party national labour bureau chief A Sivanesan.

Sivanesan told Malaysiakini today that he received numerous such calls on Sunday inquiring about the outcome of the Perak elections.

He claimed that yesterday his mobile phone was jammed with such calls and that he could not attend to the calls as he was in the midst of a court case.

rela civil suit shooting death 130906 a sivanesanSivanesan (right) said such public resentment of the Perak DAP election results among Indians at ground level might affect the chances of Pakatan recapturing Perak in the next general election.

In the 12th general election of March 2008, the mood raised by the Hindu Rights Action Force rally in Kuala Lumpur in November 2007 was the turning point that denied BN its two-thirds majority, besides losing five states in the process.

This time around, this Indian factor may once again turn the political tide in BN's favour, should a snap general election be called in April next year as speculated.

The BN under the leadership of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is going all out to regain the lost confidence of the Indian community, making special allocations to cater to the

needs of the community that sees itself as marginalised.

He has also been moving aggressively to initiate on-hand and on-ground programmes, such as offering business loans and solving problems affecting the basic rights of Indians as Malaysian citizens.

According to media reports, Najib has even gone to the extent of asking veteran MIC supremo S Samy Vellu, who has been perceived as an obstacle in the regaining of Indian confidence in the BN, to move into the foreign service as a Malaysian ambassador, with full ministerial status.

Najib moves with the Indians

At times, Najib avoids the influence of Indian-based parties and moves directly with the Indian community to try to change their mindset and win their hearts back to the BN.

Another factor that is working against the Pakatan coalition is that it has failed to acknowledge the Human Rights Party (HRP), which is championing the basic rights of all Indians.

On the other hand, Indians in Pakatan seem to be unhappy with their status quo in the presumed alternative party to BN, especially in PKR and DAP, which they claim have sidelined them, just like the BN did for the past 53 years.

However, under the renewed political energy of Najib, who has gone to great pains to try please the community, the Indians could well do a face-turn, seeing a new political dimension in the BN to address their grouses.

In the Perak scenario, MIC is working overtime with community projects and roadshows, especially in Sungai Siput and Buntong, to ensure that the support of the Indian community returns to BN.

zambry abdul kadir interview 200409 07Menteri Besar Zambry Abd Kadir, with the cooperation of BN leaders, is also making the silver state the launchpad for many national and festive programmes to boost the state BN's political image among Perakians.

Zambry is also giving importance to ensure that Buntong shines in the limelight, with state-level and religious functions even, to capture the minds and hearts of the residents, especially the Indian community.

Buntong biggest vote bank of Indian community

Buntong is the biggest vote bank of the Indian community in the country and MIC, HRP and DAP are trying to influence the votes into their party stream.

DAP considers Buntong its stronghold, but the reality on the ground is that MIC and HRP are sapping up the support of the voters, with the HRP possibly becoming a spoiler to the DAP's efforts to retain the seat.

NONEThere is a possibility that the BN, with its huge political machinery, can recapture the state seat with the MIC now as an advantage in the political picture.

It will be Waterloo for the DAP if its claim of being multiracial does not materialise in getting

the support of the Indian community and loses Buntong in the next general election.

The ground reality in Perak is such that DAP is expected to lose many state seats in the next general election as many DAP representatives are allegedly not doing their homework in addressing the problems of their constituents.

A DAP insider told Malaysiakini that the party leadership is reviewing the performance of all elected state representatives and many non-performers would be dropped in the next election to boost the failing party image and resolve voters' concerns and expectations.

Another bone of contention among Perakians is the political stand-off between BN and Pakatan lawmakers each time the state assembly sits, with the lawmakers failing to live up to the expectations of the voters in addressing shortcomings in the state system.

Perakians are fed-up with these political antics of the lawmakers. What is needed is not political mileage in the state assembly sittings but safeguarding the people's interests as they are the stakeholders who will determine Perak's political direction.

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