

PKR leaders find silver lining in damning UM survey
Malaysiakini.com
Disember 10, 2010

A survey released this week that concluded that PKR's internal polls had caused a major blow to the party's public image may not necessarily be a bad thing, says the party's leaders.

forum direct election in political parties klscah 261010 tian chuaPKR's newly-elected vice president Tian Chua (left) points out that a large portion of the survey respondents said they had learned about the polls through the mainstream media and this had provided the party "unprecedented" public familiarisation.

"This was because there was an intensity in the mainstream media's coverage of the polls. In the short term, I guess it would damage or affect our image, but in the long run it may not be the case because what we have done is impress on the public what is going on in PKR," said Chua.

"In the past PKR was considered a non-entity. Now what the mainstream media has done is introduce us to the public psyche. We have to ride on this and figure out how to turn it to our advantage," he said.

Chua was referring to the Universiti Malaya Centre of Democracy and Election Studies (Umcedel) survey, that concluded that 52 percent of 1,124 respondents from several constituencies in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor had lost confidence in PKR de facto chief Anwar Ibrahim's leadership.

The survey was conducted in November as PKR was conducting the tail end of its internal polls that was plagued by numerous allegations of irregularities.

PKR leaders have conceded weaknesses in the polls but said the complaints were isolated and were being investigated.

Media strategy required

The Umcedel survey stated that 37.8 percent of the respondents had followed the polls through the mainstream print and broadcast media.

azlan"This is the objective reality in Malaysia. I would think the mainstream media plays an important role to paint a negative image of us (the opposition).

"We can't change people's reading habits. We have to live within these limitations," said Chua.

The Batu MP said that thus far, their only means for reaching out to the masses was limited to ceramah and party literature in the form of flyers and brochures.

"The challenge for us is how we can get the mainstream media to carry our news, and swing public opinion through the mainstream media," said Chua.

He noted that the mainstream media's intense coverage of their party polls has also given Umno the jitters and prompted the Malay party to postpone its own internal elections by 18 months.

"They (Umno) realised the damage could be equally vacillating or worse if any internal issues are leaked to the media... they know that the consequences are severe.

"(Similarly) the BN convention was supposed to be a major public relations event, but why was it closed door? They can see the impact (of media coverage) on the electorate," he said.

'PKR will recover'

Former PKR vice-president R Sivarasa, who failed to defend his position during the polls, opined that news reports on the alleged problems were "exaggerated" and thus influenced the survey outcome.

NONE "But, the public can see that after the national congress the party is consolidated and looking forward.

"We are not too concerned by the immediate effects of the election... (although) the mainstream media had succeeded in portraying a negative perception, we will overcome this in a couple of months," said Sivarasa (left) confidently.

Meanwhile, Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai, whose constituents were apparently part of the survey, doubted the validity of the survey because it was conducted only over the month of November and not over an extended period.

He said that more established pollsters such as Merdeka Centre had regular surveys that allow data to be compared and seen in context.

"I have my reservations about the survey," said Tan, a veteran MP and DAP national vice-chairperson.

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