

Nation outgrown race-based politics : survey
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 8, 2008

Malaysians have outgrown race-based politics and overwhelmingly want the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition to merge into a multiracial party, according to a survey. MCPX

The Merdeka Centre research firm said that Malays, who dominate the population, as well as ethnic Chinese and Indians no longer believe they are betraying their race by voting across ethnic lines.

"People are now looking more at issues like the cost of living. People are more practical in their considerations, and not weighed down by communal interests," the centre's executive director Ibrahim Suffian told AFP.

The phenomenon was seen in March 8 elections, when the Malay-dominated coalition suffered an unprecedented setback as support swung towards a three-party coalition alliance led by the multiracial PKR party.

PKR's partners, the Islamic party PAS and the predominantly Chinese DAP also enjoyed solid support from Malaysians of all races who made a strong protest vote against the coalition.

The Merdeka Centre - which polled 1,000 voters from March 14-21 - found that two in every three voters want the coalition, which is made up of 14 parties representing particular races, to meld into a single entity.

ibrahim suffian merdeka centre 150904 seated

Ibrahim (right) said, however, that there was only a "remote" chance of drastic reform by Umno, which helms the ruling coalition that has dominated politics since independence 50 years ago.

Most born after 1969 riots

He said the party was still focused on race issues, while voters were less mindful of episodes like the 1969 ethnic violence that was a defining moment in Malaysian politics.

"A significant proportion of the electorate is young, most people were born after the 1969 riots and people's views are no longer shaped only by those events," he said.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has acknowledged that the drubbing in the polls, which saw the coalition lose a third of parliamentary seats and five states, was a call for reform from voters.

However, he has insisted he has a mandate to rule and has rejected calls to stand down to take responsibility for the unprecedented electoral setback.

The survey found that the issues which dominated the polls, including anger over the government's handling of the economy and tense race relations, as well as crime and corruption, continued to concern voters.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news//81053>