

It's just too tough for BN to reform
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 8, 09
Lee Way Loon

The March 8 general election one year ago was the watershed for Malaysia politics as Malaysians used their votes to express their dissatisfaction against the Barisan Nasional in their eagerness for change.

For the first time, BN lost its two-third majority in Parliament and five states had fallen into the opposition coalition Pakatan Rakyat's hand, resulting in the appearance of a two-coalition system.

Shortly after the landmark general election, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he had received the voters' message and was committed for reform.

However, how far has BN been reformed after one year? Were these efforts enough to change negative perceptions on the coalition?

Based on the public perceptions as shown in the poll and the last two by-elections, the answer is clearly no, and it is worsened by the political and constitutional crisis in Perak recently.

According to Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (KLSCAH) chief executive officer Tang Ah Chai's analysis: "Anwar controlled the whole game by claiming there would be defection of BN MPs before Sept 16. BN was at a disadvantage and unable to initiate any reform.

"However, after Sept 16, BN finally feel less pressured, but their reform plan was still not clear. They were concentrating on handling internal crisis," he added.

Tang said although BN try to strike back through defections in Perak, the coalition's high-handedness had made it more difficult to win back the people's support.

MCA central committee member Loh Seng Kok also agreed that many people were not happy with how the BN acted in the Perak crisis.

"The feedbacks I got were that the new government should be backed by the people's mandate," he said

"Some were also not happy with the fact that the police were following the order of the administration officer. This made the officer looked more powerful than the state assembly."

"If BN cannot handle it properly, it would hampered the coalition more," he added.

However, Loh's view was only a minority among the BN leaders. Another BN leader, Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, was also calling for new state elections in Perak.

Ting: I also feel ashamed

There were also a lack of internal reform efforts within BN. Although the coalition had set up four committees to initiate reform, there were no substantial actions being taken after eight months.

It was understood that one of them, the BN Rebranding Committee, chaired by former Terengganu menteri besar Idris Jusoh, had not submitted any proposal.

A source said that the committee didn't have any routine meeting and there is no enthusiasm to move forward.

"If you want to rebrand, than you should move quickly. If not, how can you face the next general election? It looks like most leaders are more interested in by-elections and party elections," he added.

The recent incident of DAP Bukit Gelugor MP Karpal Singh being mobbed by a group of angry Umno Youth members, also indicated that Umno had yet to change their attitude.

Former MCA secretary-general Ting Chew Peh said the incident showed Umno is not prepared to reform and the youth wing is still arrogant.

He warned that if BN continues their attitude, they will definitely pay a bigger price in the next general election.

Ting, the former MP for Gopeng, also said Perakians are generally not happy with BN government because they think that the Pakatan government had performed well.

"I am a BN man, but I also feel ashamed," Ting added.

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