

Umno's non-Malay partners may hamper BN's Putrajaya goal, say analysts
Malaysian Insider
September 22, 2012
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 22 — Analysts have predicted Umno's victory in the coming polls but said the ruling party would have to look out for flagging support for its non-Malay partners in Barisan Nasional (BN) as the Najib administration's 1 Malaysia may not have achieved its goal.

While they said the concept, which promotes multiracial inclusiveness as introduced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, is a good strategy to recapture the non-Malay vote, its effectiveness in wooing these communities back into BN's fold was still questionable.

The analysts also raised concerns over the political situation in east Malaysia and warned Putrajaya of "protest votes" from among even those in BN, which was largely credited for the ruling pact's colossal losses in the last general election.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) political analyst Professor Datuk Dr Mohammad Agus Yusoff said Umno need not worry over Malays votes as the party would likely garner up to 70 per cent of votes from the country's dominant ethnic group.

"But they have to worry over non-Malay voters who do not support Umno," he said when contacted recently by The Malaysian Insider.

"We don't know the trend of new voters, who are said to be influential. So we have to look at new Malay voters, especially the youths who will determine the outcome [of the polls]," he added.

Universiti Malaya analyst Professor Datuk Abdul Halim Sidek said BN component parties will gain momentum with the support given to Umno by Malay voters.

"Compared to MCA and Gerakan, Malay voters are still with Umno," he said.

But despite their strong belief that Malay support was still with Umno, the analysts did not reject the "protest vote" phenomenon, pointing out BN's dismal performance in the last election in 2008 was the result of this very factor.

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) political scientist Professor Dr Jayum Jawan said "protest votes" had weakened BN in the last election.

"Umno's performance deteriorated, whereas MCA and MIC, two main BN components, were shattered," he said.

"The seat that is still defended by MCA is a seat that has many Malay voters who helped defend the seat for the party.

"MIC also does not have a majority, only a few seats where Indian voters are around 15 to 28 per cent," he added.

Another analyst from UKM, who declined to be named, also shared the same view on "protest votes", and said its effects on BN will be severe this coming election.

"Those who are selected to represent Umno in the election are not those fit to be candidates," he claimed.

"In reality, about 80 per cent of Umno leaders who worked hard for many years and invested a lot of money and effort are not likely to be chosen as candidates," he said, appearing to suggest that these unhappy candidates and their supporters may vote against BN in protest.

Jayum also questioned the effectiveness of Najib's 1 Malaysia concept, a political platform launched by the prime minister in his bid to unite Malaysians regardless of race and religion.

"It is only effective if the concept of 1 Malaysia is clear, comprehensive, inclusive and is quick to reach the people," he said.

"However there is still a lot that is not in line with 1 Malaysia, like the monopoly in public services by the federal government, and states with ethnic groups that are still neglected," he added, referring to Sabah and Sarawak.

The analyst agreed that BN will triumph and form a government in GE-13, but the Chinese voters would likely remain the main stumbling block in the pact's bid to recapture Putrajaya with a strong majority.

"BN can still win in this situation. But it will not be a comfortable win. Despite that factor, it will not be as tough as the 2008 elections," the unnamed analyst said.

"BN will win because Pakatan Rakyat (PR) component parties are not in tune in ideology and aim."

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