

**In Selangor, voters seen not biting on Dr M's race bait**  
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**By Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 13 — Urban Selangor voters are not likely to fall for ethnic-based arguments from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to give the Barisan Nasional (BN) enough votes to regain the country's richest state, say analysts.

The former prime minister and ex-BN chairman said that Selangor needed to be saved from Pakatan Rakyat (PR) to protect the position of the Malays and Bumiputeras.

"I don't think they will buy this old politics. They have moved beyond ethnicity (politics)," said Prof Dr Jayum A. Jawan from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), adding that Dr Mahathir is trying to drum up support on the basis of ethnicity.

He pointed out that Selangor was a developed and mainly urban state, saying that Malay voters there would not fall for racially-tinged politics and it was "not logical" to say that the Malays would lose power if BN lost at the polls.

Jayum said the interests of the Malay community in Selangor have not been neglected under a PKR administration, pointing out that this was led by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim, a Malay.

"To understand the Chinese and Indians doesn't mean giving up or undermining Malays' position or rights," he said.

He also said the non-Malay voters' support has shifted to PR, basing his observation on the Election 2008 result, and added that Dr Mahathir's statements would not help BN gain more votes from them.

"They (BN) should be concentrating on putting out a better package to attract Malays," he said.

Jayum also said people-based policies that did not appeal to just a single ethnic group would be a more effective means of winning support, saying BN should take care of all races.

Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, a political analyst from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) said BN appeared to depend on Malays — the largest ethnic group in Selangor — for votes, as the Chinese voters were now distancing themselves from supporting the coalition.

By playing up the issue of race, BN hoped to take over Selangor by coupling some support from the Chinese community and over half of the Malay votes, he said.

"They have to gain (support) by trying to use Malay right issue, Malay interests to gain support for BN," he said, adding, "That is something they plan to do now, because they don't think they can get a lot of Chinese support."

He also predicted that if BN managed to win in Selangor, it would be by a slim majority in the 56-seat state assembly.

Azizuddin said the issues of race might only translate into votes for the BN from those living in the rural areas, which are predominantly Malay.

But in urban areas, he said the economy and a better standard of living would be the determining factor for voters, irrespective of race group.

The academic conceded Dr Mahathir's remarks could affect Chinese support for BN, but noted that there were hard-core supporters of the coalition's component parties MCA and Gerakan.

"Those who are non-partisan, fence sitters among Chinese and Indians probably would think twice about the statement from Mahathir..." he said, saying they might question why the former prime minister only focused on the interests of Malays in his remark.

Wan Saiful Wan Jan from the IDEAS think-tank said Dr Mahathir's statement was "very clearly targeting the Malays and Bumiputera voters in Selangor and everywhere".

"I think some Malay voters may be attracted by what Tun Mahathir said," Wan Saiful said, but cautioned these remarks did not help national unity and would not be good for Malaysia in the long run.

When asked about the impact on non-Malay voters, he said, "I think it would not affect the Chinese because majority of Chinese would have made up their minds and are not returning."

Wan Saiful also highlighted difficulties faced by Umno and its current president Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who was pushing for an inclusive model of "1 Malaysia", but with "old guards" like Dr Mahathir reminding the public that Umno was a communal party.

He said ethnic-based parties need people to be divided among ethnic lines to remain relevant.

But Wan Saiful said fence-sitters were not likely to be influenced by just one statement from Dr Mahathir, saying they would look at the bigger picture such as policies and the need for a two-party system.

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