

In GE13, BN wins Malay heartland, Pakatan the cities
Malaysian Insider
May 6, 2013
By Jahabar Sadiq

MAY 6 — There are two Malaysias. One from the Malay heartland that swung back to Barisan Nasional (BN) on Datuk Seri Najib Razak's 1 Malaysia campaign to retake Kedah and run the country despite a smaller federal majority in Election 2013.

The other is a multiracial Malaysia that gave more votes, federal and state seats to Pakatan Rakyat (PR) especially in cities and towns, reflecting the growing rural-urban divide of a fast-developing nation.

The record 80 per cent turnout from the 12.9 million voters eligible to cast their ballots in yesterday's general election and close results in BN victories reveal hardcore support for either coalitions, firming the idea of a two-party system in Malaysia.

And the divided loyalties of the majority Malays between being grateful to BN that has developed Malaysia in its 56 years of unbroken rule or taking the promise of equity from three parties campaigning against cronyism and corruption that they blame on the ruling coalition. In the end, BN won 133 federal seats and Pakatan took 89.

"I think they were taken in by some of the undertakings given by the opposition... and that's why there was that swing.... and a lot of sentiments there, some of them racial in nature, that were being played up in this election, which is not very healthy for this country," Najib told reporters at the Umno headquarters early this morning, shortly after a simple majority victory cemented BN's place in Putrajaya.

"I expected it but I did not expect it to this extent. None of us expected it to this extent. But despite the extent of the swing against us, BN did not fall," he added.

But the 1 Malaysia campaign won Najib support among the Malays, who form a major part of the bottom 40 per cent that his administration has pledged to improve as part of a campaign for a high-income nation.

The hardworking Umno president has worked on various initiatives, including cash handouts and setting up an agency to build affordable housing for the urban poor unable to cope with rising living costs.

Najib's appeal and the initiatives have kept BN as government at federal and state level although it only managed to get simple majorities in states like Perak and Terengganu.

But BN also suffered losses in his Umno birthplace and bastion Johor, where the centrally-planned Iskandar corridor is attracting investments as well as concern among Malays that they could lose out to foreign investors.

It was in Johor that a mini Malay swing with a major Chinese turn for PR that has help cement the coalition's hold on major cities from as far north as George Town through Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, Malacca and now the southern state's big towns.

"The Chinese were the biggest swing with help from the Malays, which then cut our support," said Pulai MP Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed, who saw his 2008 majority of 20,447

votes get cut down to just 3,200 in this year's elections.

This has helped the DAP and PKR pick up seats for their nett increase in parliamentary representation for the next five years while PAS lost a few seats that many blame on Malay votes sticking to BN and vice-versa, say analysts.

Yet, the mainly Malay urban poor have rejected BN despite receiving its offerings of affordable housing, rebates and handouts in favour of PR's talk of change and campaign against cronyism and corruption, they added.

As can be seen in the latest elections, where Malays and Chinese in the cities have come out in droves to support the opposition while those in the rural areas continue to vote BN.

The Malay swing for BN has also been limited as the coalition only won 275 of the 505 state seats up for grabs, leaving a substantial 230 state seats to PR.

"It isn't a race war, it's a class war," said an analyst who declined to be named, adding that Kedah went back to BN more due to PAS's incompetence than BN's appeal to the state folks.

"The distribution of the state seats will show you that PR is getting support from a wider range of people, not just one race or one place," he added, saying BN will have to study both federal and state results for future campaigns.

He said the steady loss of federal seats and support is a concern for BN as it would need to rebuild the coalition's ranks to take on the incumbents in the next contest.

Hakcipta © 2013 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/in-ge13-bn-wins-malay-heartland-pakatan-the-cities/>