

BN made young Malay voters fear us, say opposition lawmakers
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BY ELIZABETH ZACHARIAH

First-time and young Malay voters were indoctrinated with Malay identity issues which the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) used to instil fear of the opposition, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers said today.

They said this was the reason first-time and young Malay voters chose BN in the last general election – as revealed in a voting pattern study by pollsters Merdeka Center recently.

Both PKR's Rafizi Ramli and Zairil Khir Johari of DAP said the findings of the study were hardly surprising.

"We knew it was an uphill battle to get the young Malay voters – those aged between 21 and 26 – to vote for us," Rafizi told The Malaysian Insider.

This was because, he pointed out, those in that age group had just come out from a pro-BN system, where they have been drummed into believing that they would have to fight for Malay rights.

"This is seen in schools, universities and everywhere else. These people are a lot like the rural voters – they rely a lot on the mainstream media.

"The image BN delivers to them is that PR is not at all interested in the Malay rights, which makes them fear us," he added.

Merdeka Center revealed that contrary to popular belief, the majority of first-time Malay and young Malay voters threw their support behind BN, indicating that the opposition had not done enough to convince them that their future was secure with the PKR, DAP and PAS.

Young Malays, it said, would be an even larger chunk of new voters in future polls than the nearly two-thirds, or 64.17% of new voters, registered this year.

The 21-30 age group, Zairil noted, were more like fence-sitters. They were not permanent BN or PR supporters, he said.

"They have insecurities and BN has managed to play on this by going with racial issues.

In other words, BN has "articulated" their problems in a racialised manner, he said.

"They were too young when the 1998 Reformasi took place. So they are not aware of how we came here."

But Zairil added, "Whether or not BN's strategies can work in the next GE, remains to be seen".

He said the influence of social media and the Internet had contributed greatly to PR's good showing in the May 5 polls and pointed out that it would only get "stronger and stronger".

"And this age group will most likely go for those who can address their issues and what affects them. And this is something that PR needs to take heed of."

Rafizi, who is PKR strategic director, observed that although the young Malay voters would start out as staunch BN supporters, they would doubt the ruling coalition later on in life.

"By 26, they see certain things and probably would have a first-hand experience in corruption and the failure of BN to deliver. So they become less convinced with BN.

By the time they are 30, Rafizi said, they would be strong PR supporters.

"We (PR) made a practical decision before the election, that we would tackle those aged 26 and above as the younger ones have a lot of fear in them.

"How do we address this fear?" he questioned.

The DAP, Rafizi noted, has been used by Umno as a bogeyman to create this fear in young Malay voters who believed they would no longer be relevant should PR come into power.

He revealed that PKR has mapped out a plan, which will take two to three years, to address this issue.

"We have to confront and reconstruct the Malay identity and we also cannot be seen to be overwhelmingly supportive of the non-Malays.

"I am confident this pattern can be reversed so BN should not be too happy about this yet. Once PR concentrates on younger Malay voters and addresses their issues, BN is gone," he added.

DAP political education director Liew Chin Tong and PKR's Nurul Izzah Anwar singled out the National Service for instilling fear of the opposition among young Malays.

Liew said the young Malay voters were mostly school-leavers who had been "bombarded with propaganda material".

"We were warned about this much earlier about this," Liew said.

He admitted the DAP had its work cut out for them to woo in the young Malay voters as the party is seen to be Chinese-oriented.

"We need to engage everyone," he stressed. "We must be seen as representing and being the voice of Malays as well."

He said the older Malay voters were more pro-opposition as they have witnessed corruption and cronyism.

"They are less susceptible to propaganda. It is an uphill battle because our critics are trying to put us in a box, calling us pro-Chinese."

Nurul Izzah asserted that PR had to take another look at their efforts in reaching out to the younger crowd.

"Maybe ceramah and all are not suitable anymore. We have to look at having more

youth-oriented activities.

She, however, noted that PR had already taken a step in the right direction by raising many issues which the younger crowd was associated with.

"For example, we have talked about the reduction of car prices." – August 16, 2013.

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