

**BN used racist messages to win over rural voters, says Tribunal legal head**  
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**BY TRINNA LEONG**

Money politics and the distribution of leaflets with racist messages pushed the rural votes towards Barisan Nasional, said the Bersih People's Tribunal legal head today.

Professor Gurdial Singh said the messages in the leaflets created fear and hatred among the voters.

The pamphlets presented at the tribunal today were distributed in Tebrau, Johor.

They contained caricatures of opposition politicians implementing laws that would allegedly jeopardise the rights of Malays and devalue the social values of Bumiputeras.

"When it comes to elections, it becomes a real life issue because it affects the way votes go due to fear," said Gurdial.

"With messages like Bumiputeras would become beggars in their own land, it tends to generate extreme hostility and fans the waves of racism. In the urban and semi-urban areas, this may not be an issue."

The BN government's ability to reach out to rural voters was also attributed to its vast resources, an issue that drew attention to BN's sources of funds from ownership of private institutions.

Universiti Malaya Social and Behavioral Science faculty dean Dr Terence Gomez said in video testimony the government's access to vast funds and the media helped the party to win seats by stirring emotions and affecting mindsets during the campaigning.

"The opposition doesn't have a far reach like the BN. They don't have access to such funds and channels. The BN government's ownership of the media had a greater influence on poorer electorates," he said.

Gomez added that political parties in Malaysia are heavily involved in businesses and companies, probably making it a phenomenon unique to Malaysia alone.

The academician noted that the majority of these businesses belong to the ruling party, adding that this does create an uneven playing field when it comes to election funds.

A researcher at the Centre for Independent Journalists (CIJ) presented its report entitled "Watching the watchdog" and confirmed the opinions of the experts that limited access to information channels had affected the voting patterns.

"The rural and poor were deprived of information on what's a free and fair election due to lack of access," said Dr Tessa Houghton, citing online media as the only channel that the opposition could use. – September 20, 2013.

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/bn-used-racist-messages-to-win-over-rural-voters-says-tribunal-panellist>