

Pakatan Can't Sustain Strong Ge13 Win In Next Polls Due To Internal Strife, Disagreements, Forum Told
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Election 2013 could be the last strong win by Pakatan Rakyat (PR) as the issue of hudud, internal party conflicts and a lack of effort to court rural voters will hurt its chances in the next general election, a forum was told last night.

Speaking at the "GE 14: Will there be another political tsunami?" forum, panellists Liew Chin Tong, Wan Hamidi Hamid and Hishamuddin Rais noted that in the past year since the May 5 polls, the opposition pact had gained little ground in their dream to capture Putrajaya despite winning more seats in the 13th general election.

Liew said the hudud issue had worsened PR's chances of triggering a political tsunami in the next election, and urged its Islamist ally PAS to review its priorities.

"Hudud was a strategy for PAS to affirm its Islamic identity. But does it remain a relevant strategy, or are we just trapping ourselves behind this one single theme? What is our priority? Hudud, or economic justice?" the Kluang MP said at the Kuala Lumpur Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall.

PR won 89 seats in GE13, seven more than in Election 2008 which saw the DAP, PAS and PKR agree to straight fights against Barisan Nasional (BN), causing the ruling coalition to suffer historic losses of five state governments and the federal Parliament's two-thirds super majority.

Liew noted that hudud only started to become a strategy for PAS in the 1980s, to differentiate itself from Umno after Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's government began to absorb Islamic symbols.

The young DAP leader said PR should refocus its energies on solving people's issues such as traffic problems, health matters and water woes, rather than be sidetracked by hudud.

He said cooperation between PAS and DAP was vital for PR's continued survival, quipping: "We know that when DAP does not work together with

PAS, the two parties will end up meeting and becoming friends in Kamunting.”

DAP member and Inisiatif Impian Malaysia adviser Wan Hamidi said capturing Putrajaya required the opposition pact to win more rural votes, but it had done nothing to improve its standing among that particular demographic.

“In the 13th general election, we saw an urban tsunami, and this was proven in Sabah where the urban and semi-urban constituencies voted for change.

“But we have failed with the rural voters, and the BN will continue to capitalise on this through its delineation exercise, by breaking up the kampung into small constituencies and ensuring BN wins even if we secure the majority vote.”

Wan Hamidi said most of PR’s campaign strategy, such as its vow to reduce car prices, was targeted towards the middle class and had alienated the rural poor.

“It’s a pity Pakatan has not focused its energies on this after the 13th general election ended.

“Instead, we are arguing about the hudud issue, and this is making the people, whose votes we need, even more disappointed in us,” he said. He added that the issue was compounded by the lack of alternative media in rural areas, and BN’s ready supply of subsidies for the rural voters and the poor.

But Hishamuddin, a social activist, said that PR would never win a general election as long as the election system remained unchanged.

“It’s not Umno you are up against, but the electorate system and the election commission. There is no way a political tsunami will happen because Umno and the EC will continue its redelineation exercise to guarantee its win,” he said.

The solution, said Hishamuddin, was to force the government to form a new election commission that would not resort to gerrymandering to maintain the political status quo.

“Millions will have to go down to the streets, surround Putrajaya, and have the government set up a new election commission to manage a clean and fair election. The current election is a lie, so why don’t we change it?”

“Don’t maintain the illusion that a change in government is possible right now. With the current election system in place, change is impossible,” said Hishamuddin, who was formerly a committee member of electoral reforms group Bersih 2.0.

Bersih 2.0’s People Tribunal concluded in March that the 13th general election was not conducted in a free and fair manner, and the numerous irregularities were the result of deliberate acts of fraud.

The tribunal, made up of local and foreign experts, said the election commission must undergo a comprehensive reform, and laws should be changed to ensure the body was independent from the government.

It also noted that the general election had an excessive number of postal and advance voters, which had allowed BN to win the election last year. – May 6, 2014.

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