

The Parliamentary By-Elections and the Shaping of Malaysian Political Landscape after the 12th
General Election

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by:

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Abstract

The 12th Malaysian General Election on the 8th March 2008 ended with the ruling coalition, the National Front suffering a rather humiliating defeat that it ever experienced before. For the first time since independence, the party failed to secure the two thirds majority in the parliament and lost the control five states out of thirteen states that formed the Federation of Malaysia. The significance factor that determined the triumph of the opposition front was the role played by Anwar Ibrahim. In the March election, however, Anwar was barred from standing as a candidate due to legal provision after being convicted and jailed for a sodomy case which he vehemently blames as a political conspiracy.

Following an allegation that Anwar was involved with a new sodomy case with his close aide, his wife, Wan Azizah who is the president of the Justice Party decided to vacate the parliamentary seat in Permatang Pauh to pave way for Anwar to contest. The result of the by-election proved that the support for the opposition was growing and the Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi was blamed for the continuous decline of the ruling coalition. This led to his stepping down as the prime minister to pave the way for his deputy Mohd. Najib Razak. After the Permatang Pauh parliamentary by-election, there were two more parliamentary by-elections, in Kuala Terengganu and Bukit Gantang. The results of these by-elections clearly showed that the opposition is maintaining the momentum in the run up to the 13th general election scheduled for 1912/13. This paper will discuss how the scenarios as shown by these three parliamentary by-elections will determine the future political landscape of Malaysia prior to the general election.

Introduction

After the 12th Malaysian General Election there were three parliamentary by-elections which show some indication on the possible political trend in Malaysia on the run up to the 13th General Election scheduled at the latest in early 2013. The three by-elections were in Permatang Pauh, Kuala Terengganu and Bukit Gantang. The Permatang Pauh parliamentary by-election was held following the resignation of Datin Seri Wan Azizah, the President of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) or People's Justice Party as a member of parliament of the constituency to pave the way for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to become its new member of parliament. In Kuala Terengganu, the by-election was held following the death of Dato' Razali Ismail on 28th November 2008 from Barisan Nasional or National Front.¹ Similarly, the Bukit Gantang

parliamentary by-election was also held following the death of Roslan Shahrum on the 9th of February 2009 from PAS or Pan Malaysian Islamic Party.²

Permatang Pauh is considered as an opposition stronghold as it was held by the opposition party since the 1999 Malaysian General Election.³ Meanwhile Kuala Terengganu is considered as a marginal constituency since both parties, Barisan Nasional and PAS have between them managed to win the seat since the 1999 Malaysian General Election. In 1999 the parliamentary constituency was won by PAS, but Barisan Nasional managed to wrestle the seat in 2004 and maintained the victory in 2008.

Meanwhile, the Bukit Gantang parliamentary constituency is considered as Barisan Nasional stronghold since it was never won by the opposition, with the exception of the 2008 Malaysian General Election. Interestingly, however, this by-election was held in the midst of the Perak's state political crisis following the toppling of Pakatan Rakyat or People's Alliance government by Barisan Nasional as a result of the defection of two state assemblymen and a state assemblywoman to the latter.⁴ Despite the fact that Bukit Gantang was traditionally a Barisan Nasional seat and won by PAS in 2008, it is considered as a marginal seat since the margin of majority votes won by the winner of 2008 election was comparatively small.

These three parliamentary by-elections are important to both the ruling and opposition parties since it will give some indication on the people's support for them after the 12th general election. The 8th March 2008 election, perhaps was significant since it showed a clear difference from the previous general elections, particularly on the ethnic voting patterns to respective political parties. Traditionally, an ethnic group will throw its support to the respective ethnic parties that represent the group. In the 2008 general election, however, the main ethnic groups, the Malays, Chinese and Indians gave their support to the opposition. In the mixed constituency where there is no particular ethnic group making the majority, most of the seats were won by the opposition. Ironically these were the seats that the opposition found it extremely difficult to win in the previous elections. The question repeatedly being asked is whether this result indicates that the racial politics is no more an issue in the Malaysian elections or the politics of development is no more attractive to the voters? On the issue of development it might have been perceived by the majority of the voters that this is an outdated issue since development is the responsibility of any government of the day and should not be an issue in campaigning to win votes

In the 12th Malaysian General Election Barisan Nasional lost the two third majority in parliament.⁵ Apart from that the opposition parties also managed to wrestle four states, namely Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak and Selangor and maintained victory in one, that is Kelantan.⁶ This result clearly showed that the voters had shifted their trust from the government to the opposition.⁷ Even though Barisan Nasional was successful in the political coup that toppled the Pakatan Rakyat state government in Perak, this does not indicate the shifting of voters' support to the ruling party.

This paper analyses the pattern of voting in these three by-elections and shows to what the frame of mind of the voters towards the ruling and the opposition parties. Are the voters still continue to support the opposition or have they shifted their support back to the ruling party? By analysing the pattern of voting by new voters, the polling streams, the strategy used and the role of media in the three parliamentary by-elections, this paper will try to suggest some indications on the possible trend in Malaysian politics to the run up of the 13th Malaysian General Election scheduled at the latest in early 2013.⁸

Parliamentary Constituency and Election Result

Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency (P44) has 58,459 registered voters and 490 postal voters. The parliamentary seat has three state constituencies, namely Seberang Jaya (N10) won by Barisan Nasional, Permatang Pasir (N11) won by PAS and Penanti (N12) won by PKR. The voters' ethnic composition is made up of 67.60% Malays, 26.30% Chinese, 5.70% Indians and 0.30% others. The Malay voters were mostly rice farmers, factory workers, small businessmen and government servants. Since this constituency is a padi growing area with traditional Malay villages, the "Malay values" are widely practised here. The Chinese voters were made up of workers in private sector, shopkeepers and petty traders, while the Indian voters were mostly factory workers and those working in private sectors. In term of voters' distribution the state constituencies of the Permatang Pasir and Penanti are considered as a Malay majority, while the Seberang Jaya constituency is a mixed seat with a higher percentage of Chinese and Indian voters.

The voters in Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency are considered as having a relatively high political consciousness. This could be seen in the high percentage of voters' turnout in the general election. In the 12th Malaysian General Election the voter turnout was almost 82%, while in the by-election on 26 August 2008 the percentage was 81.1%. This

percentage is much higher than the national percentage of voters turnout which stood at 73.2%.

In the history of election, the Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency was first won by Anwar Ibrahim in 1982. In that election where Anwar stood as an UMNO (the component party in Barisan Nasional) candidate after a few weeks of joining the party, he managed to wrestle the constituency from PAS high fielded the incumbent, Haji Zabidi Ali. In the election which was also contested by DAP candidate, Tan Ah Huat, Anwar managed to garner 18,849 votes with the overwhelming majority of 14,352. In the 1986 general election Anwar was challenged by PAS candidate, Muhamad Sabu who was at that time still under Restrictive Order after being released from the detention of Internal Security Act (ISA). In this election Anwar managed to get 17,979 votes with the majority of 10,479 votes. In the 1990 general election Anwar also faced PAS candidate, Mahfuz Omar. In the election Anwar again managed to achieve a resounding victory when he obtained 27,793 votes with the majority of 16,150. In the 1995 general election Anwar had to face the challenge of PAS candidate, Mazani Abdullah and DAP candidate, Abdul Rahman Manap. In this election Anwar managed to secure 27,945 votes with the majority of 23,515.⁹

Following the sacking of Anwar Ibrahim from his post as Deputy Prime Minister and in UMNO in 1998 and subsequently imprisoned after being found guilty on the sodomy case by the court, Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency was represented by his wife Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail who stood under the ticket of Parti Keadilan Nasional (KeAdilan). In the 1999 general election Barisan Nasional fielded Dr. Ibrahim Saad, Anwar's former political secretary, as its candidate. In the election Wan Azizah managed to garner 23,820 votes with the majority of 9,077. In the 2004 general election Wan Azizah was challenged by Pirdaus Ismail, a former prayer leader (imam) of National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur, as an UMNO candidate. Wan Azizah, however, managed to retain the seat by getting 27,717 votes, but with a slim majority of 590 votes. In the March 2008 general election Wan Azizah was again opposed by Pirdaus Ismail. In the election Wan Azizah managed to get 30,348 votes with the majority of 13,398 votes. With the election victory on 8 March 2008, it means that Permatang Pauh was won consecutively and represented by Anwar and Wan Azizah for seven times.

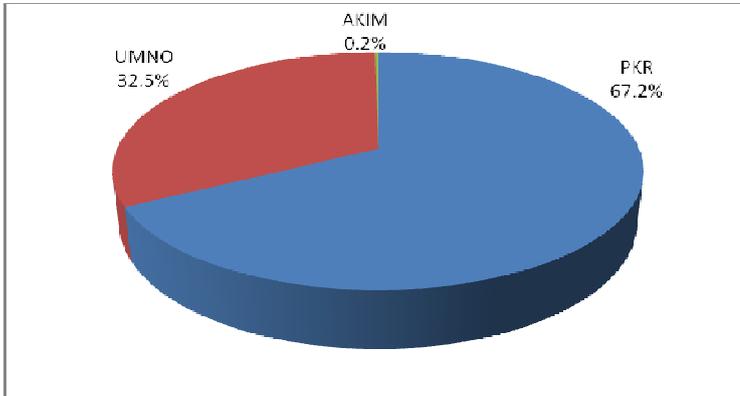
As it was proven, the support given by the voters in Permatang Pauh to Anwar Ibrahim since 1982 is almost solid. While many seats won by PKR and PAS were captured by UMNO in 2004 general election, Permatang Pauh

continued to be retained by PKR. The successive victory achieved, including against the odds, the supporters of Anwar in Permatang Pauh tend to believe that they have their own recipe to ensure the constituency continuously represented by him. Under these circumstances in the wake of the Permatang Pauh by-election on 26 August, Anwar diplomatically reminded all his party workers, who converged at the constituency to assist his campaigning machinery to respect the members of PKR in Permatang Pauh for their contribution in ensuring that he was elected as their representative.¹⁰ With their relentless effort Anwar managed to win the Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat with a convincing majority as shown by Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1: Result of Permatang Pauh Parliamentary By-Election on 26th August 2008

| Party/Votes | Total (%) |
|--------------------|------------------|
| PKR | 31172 (67.3) |
| UMNO | 15045 (32.5) |
| AKIM | 89 (0.2) |
| Eligible Votes | 46306 |
| Majority | 15671 |
| Spolied Votes | 373 |
| Voters Turnout | 81.1% |

Figure 1: Support to political parties in Permatang Pauh Parliamentary By-Election on 26th August 2008 (%)



The Kuala Terengganu parliamentary constituency (P036) has 80,229 voters, with 1035 postal voters. The parliamentary constituency is made up of four state seats, namely Wakaf Mempelam, Bandar, Ladang and Batu Buruk. The ethnic composition of the parliamentary constituency is made up of 88.3% Malays, followed by 10.9% Chinese, 0.6% Indians and 0.1% others. In terms of age, 48.6% of the population in Kuala Terengganu is below the age of 40, 36.9% between the ages of 41 – 60 and 14.6% above the age of 61. The male and female composition of voters in this constituency is almost even with 49.6% and 50.4% respectively.

Generally, the Malay voters in the constituency is made up of government servants with a small percentage working in the private sector. Apart from that, the Malays in the constituency also worked as carpenters, boat builders and fishermen who lived along the coast in Chendering and Batu Buruk. Most of the Chinese voters lived in the urban Kuala Terengganu with the biggest concentration in Kampung Cina, Pulau Kambing and Paya Bunga. The Chinese voters formed the biggest composition in the state constituency of Bandar. Most of the Chinese voters earned their living as petty traders and shopkeepers. The Indian voters only formed a minor section of the community and have no significant impact in the outcome of the election.

The voters in this constituency could be considered as having a relatively high political consciousness. This was clearly shown from the high percentage of voters' turnout during the elections. The voters' turnout in the Kuala Terengganu by-election was 79.9% and not much of a difference with that of the 12th Malaysian General Election in 2008 which stood at 82.4%. This percentage of voter turnout is considered high since the average percentage at the national level during the last general election was about

73.5%.¹¹ The voter's anticipation in this election was considered positive since the constituency was regarded as marginal where the parties that fielded the candidate had the confidence of winning. This resulted with the supporters of the contesting parties coming out in big numbers to vote in order to ensure the victory of the party that they had supported. To them every vote counts in order to achieve the desirable party's target. This scenario resulted in the parliamentary seat being hotly contested between PAS and UMNO in an effort to gain the heart and mind of the voters.

The Kuala Terengganu parliamentary constituency was established since the first general election in 1959, held after the country achieved independence from the British in 1957. In this election the parliamentary constituency was divided into Kuala Terengganu Utara (north) and Kuala Terengganu Selatan (south). The two constituencies existed until the 1969 general election. In the 1959 general election both seats were won by the opposition. Kuala Terengganu Utara was won by PAS who was represented by Haji Hasan Adli, while Kuala Terengganu Selatan was won by Onn Jaafar, who was then the leader of Parti Negara.

In the 1964 general election both seats were won by Parti Perikatan (Alliance Party), the predecessor of Barisan Nasional. In the 1969 general election the Alliance Party managed to retain Kuala Terengganu Utara but lost Kuala Terengganu Selatan to PAS. These constituencies, however, were merged in 1974 general election and became Kuala Terengganu parliamentary seat, which subsequently was won by Barisan Nasional candidate represented by Mustafa Ali. Mustapha Ali was a PAS member who represented his party which joined the coalition with UMNO and other parties to form the Barisan Nasional. Since then this parliamentary constituency was won by Barisan Nasional until 1986. Following the leadership crisis in UMNO, Parti Semangat 46 (Spirit of 1946 Party) was formed in 1987 by its former leaders, led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. In the 1990 general election Parti Semangat 46 candidate, Abdul Manan Osman won the Kuala Terengganu parliament seat defeating Zubir Embong who stood as a Barisan Nasional candidate and an independent candidate, Adenan Abdul Rahman. In the 1995 general election the seat was won by Barisan Nasional, when its candidate Abu Bakar Daud managed to garner 25620 votes defeating the incumbent Parti Semangat 46 candidate who secured only 20771 votes with the former getting a majority of 4849 votes.

The 1998 UMNO crisis clearly impacted the performance of Barisan Nasional in the 1999 election. In this election, the opposition party managed to record an impressive victory, particularly in Terengganu when PAS managed

to control the state after winning 28 of the 32 state constituencies. The Kuala Terengganu parliamentary seat was won by PAS candidate, Syed Azman Syed Ahmad Nawawi who defeated the incumbent Barisan Nasional candidate, Abu Bakar Daud. Syed Azman secured 31580 votes, while Abu Bakar garnered 17132 votes with the winner getting the majority of 4448 votes. In the 2004 general election the Barisan Nasional government managed to gain the voters' confidence when they managed to achieve a nation wide election success. In the Kuala Terengganu parliamentary constituency Barisan Nasional candidate, Razali Ismail managed to get 30994 votes as compared to incumbent PAS candidate, Syed Azman Syed Ahmad Nawawi who only managed to collect 29061 votes, with the winner securing the majority of 1933 votes.

The 2008 general election also showed a similar result as in 2004 when the Barisan Nasional candidate, Razali Ismail managed to retain the parliamentary seat by getting 32562 votes as compared to 31934 secured by PAS candidate, Mohamad Sabu and Independent candidate, Maimun Yusuf who garnered 685 votes.¹² In this election, however, the Barisan Nasional candidate only won with a slim majority of 628 votes. A number of reasons could be cited why Barisan Nasional still managed to retain the seat despite the small majority. The most important reason is the personality of its candidate, Razali Ismail who was well received by the voters, particularly the teaching community which made up almost 4,000 voters in the constituency. Despite the fact, the result of the election clearly showed that the Kuala Terengganu parliamentary constituency is a marginal seat that always showed a tough fight between the competing parties. In this constituency the ruling and the opposition parties actually had equal opportunities of winning the seat, it was won by PAS in the by-election as shown by Table 2 and Figure 2.

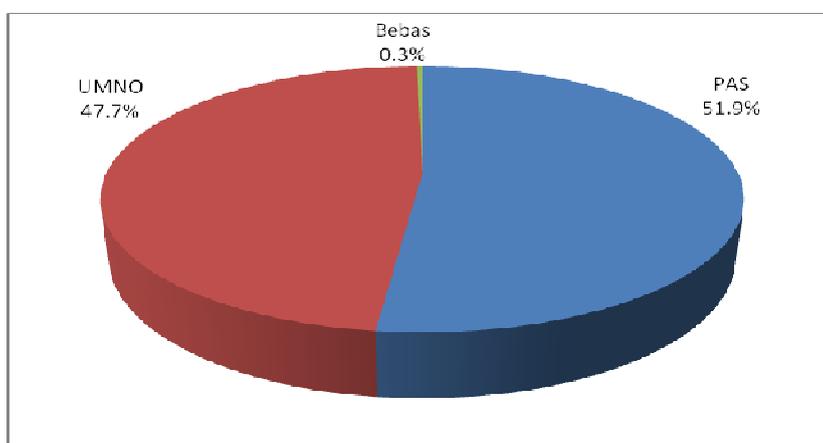
Table 2: The result of Kuala Terengganu parliamentary by-election on 17th January 2009

| Party/Votes | Total (%) |
|--------------------|------------------|
| PAS | 32883 (51.9) |
| UMNO | 30252 (47.7) |
| INDEPENDENT | 193 (0.3) |

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| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Valid Votes | 63328 |
| Majority | 2631 |
| Spoiled Votes | 665 |
| Voters Turnout | 79.9% |

Figure 2: Support to political parties in the Kuala Terengganu parliamentary by-election on 17 January 2009 (%)



The Bukit Gantang (P059) parliamentary constituency contains 55,428 registered voters with 321 postal voters. This parliamentary seat has three state constituencies, namely Kuala Sepetang (N13), Changkat Jering (N14) and Trong (N15). In the 12th Malaysian General Election, the state seats of Kuala Sepetang and Changkat Jering were won by PKR while the state seat of Trong was won by Barisan Nasional. The Malay voters in this constituency are made up of 63.3% of the total voters as compared to Chinese voters of about 27.2%. This parliamentary constituency also has a sizeable number of Indian voters who made up of 9.6% and others 0.01%. The main concentration of Malay voters is in the state constituency of Trong while the state constituencies of Kuala Sepetang and Changkat Jering are mixed seats with relatively higher Chinese and Indian voters, as compared to the state constituency of Trong.

The Bukit Gantang parliamentary constituency is considered as a rural seat since there are many traditional Malay villages, especially in the state constituencies of Changkat Jering and Trong. Generally, the Malay voters in the constituency worked as farmers, petty traders and pensioners. A small

number of Malay voters in this constituency also worked as teachers, government servants and employed in private sectors. Most of the Chinese voters in the state constituency of Kuala Sepetang worked as fishermen, shopkeepers and restaurant operators, while the majority of the Indian voters worked in the rubber estates in the state constituency of Trong with a small number working as petty traders and factory workers.

In terms of voters' turnout, Bukit Gantang parliamentary constituency has a relatively lower voter turnout as compared to Permatang Pauh or Kuala Terengganu. In the 1999 general election the voters' turnout for the constituency was 67.4% but dropped to 51.4% in the 2004 general election. The voter's turnout, however, increased to 72.4% in the 2008 general election and continued to increase to 75.1% in the parliamentary by-election in April 2009. The lower voter turnout contributed to the voters' apathy on the current issues, particularly during the election, since they were satisfied with the current situation locally and nationally. To the voters as long as their basic needs are duly satisfied and their welfares are well looked after, they prefer to maintain the status quo. This resulted in the voters not taking seriously on the outcome of the election.

This scenario, however, showed some difference in the 1999 general election. This election was conducted in the atmosphere that resulted in the higher voter turnout. The situation however was rather calm in the 2004 general election where Malaysia was more stable politically after Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was appointed as premier. This factor contributed to the drop in voters' turnout in the election. The percentage of voters' turnout, however, increased in the 2008 general election and in 2009 parliamentary by-election when several issues arose up following a new political development that took place nationally and in the state. This is clearly indicated by the interest shown by the decreasing percentage of voters who did not turn out to vote in the elections, namely 32.6% in 1999, 48.6% in 2004, 27.6% in 2008 and 24.9% in 2009.

The Bukit Gantang parliamentary constituency was created in 1986. In the general election Barisan Nasional candidate Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan managed to defeat PAS candidate, Baharuddin Haji Abdul Latif with the majority of 6951 votes. In the 1990 general election Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan again defeated the PAS candidate, Azizan Mohamed Desa with the majority of 7213. In the 1995 general election the Parti Semangat 46 candidate, Abdullah Hudi Haji Abdul Latif was also defeated by Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan with the majority of 15154. In the 1999 election Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan still

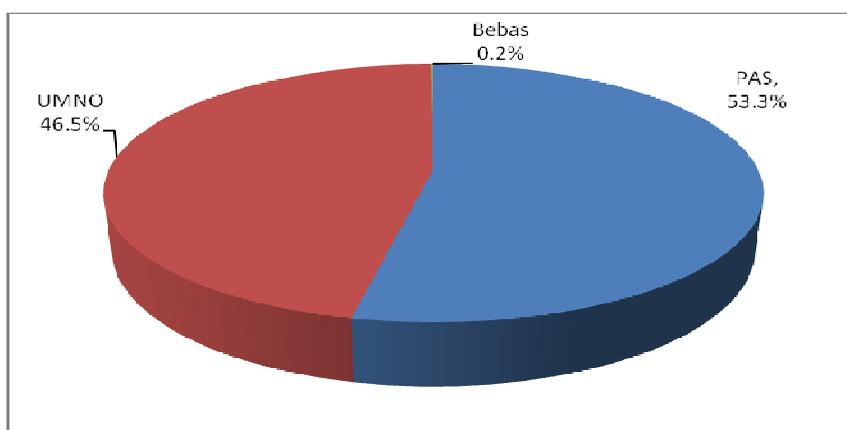
managed to retain the seat with another convincing majority of 5101 votes defeating the PAS candidate, Roslan Shaharum.

In the 2004 general election, however, UMNO surrendered the Bukit Gantang parliamentary seat to Parti Gerakan, a component party in Barisan Nasional. In this election Tan Lian Hoe managed to defeat PAS candidate, Dr. Lo' Lo' Mohamed Ghazali with the majority of 6702. In 2008 general election the seat was returned to UMNO, but its candidate, Abdul Azim Mohamad Zabidi was defeated by PAS candidate, Roslan Shaharum with the majority of 1566. In the by-election in April 2009 which was called following the sudden death of Roslan Shahrum, PAS candidate, Ir. Nizar Jamaludin managed to defeat Barisan Nasional candidate, Ismail Safian as shown by Table 3 and Figure 3.

Figure 3: The result of Bukit Gantang parliamentary by-election on 7th April 2009

| Party/Votes | Total (%) |
|--------------------|------------------|
| PAS | 21860 (53.3) |
| UMNO | 19071 (46.5) |
| INDEPENDENT | 68 (0.2) |
| Valid Votes | 40993 |
| Majority | 2789 |
| Spolied Votes | 456 |
| Voters Turnout | 75.1% |

Figure 3: Support to political parties in Bukit Gantang on 7th April 2009 (%)



Voting Patterns of Young Voters

In the elections, young voters are those aged between 21 and 40. During the polling day these voters normally vote at the 5th or 6th polling streams. However, there were polling streams that started with bigger numerals, not from number 1. In Permatang Pauh by-election the polling centre at Jalan Tuna in Seberang Jaya state constituency, the polling stream started from number 6 to 10. Similarly, the polling centre at Tanah Liat Mukim 8 in state constituency of Permatang Pasir, the polling stream started from number 4 to 7. In Kuala Terengganu parliamentary constituency the polling centre at Losong Penglima Perang in Wakaf Mempelau state constituency started from polling streams 3 to 5. In polling centre at Tok Ku in Bandar state constituency the polling streams started from 4 to 7. In Bukit Gantang parliamentary constituency the polling centre at Ayer Putih in Kuala Sepetang state constituency, the polling streams started from number 6 to 7. At the polling centre in Simpang Baru in the state constituency of Changkat Jering the polling streams started from number 5 to 7. At the polling centres at Trong Barat and Permatang Raja Trong state constituencies, the polling streams started from number 2 to 3. The polling centre in Bukit Gantang Selatan in the same state constituency, the polling streams started from number 4 to 5.

Based on the information obtained from Election Commission (SPR) the numerals of the polling streams represented different constituencies in order to avoid confusion. For example, polling streams 1 to 4 is for constituency A and polling streams 5 to 7 for constituency B. Even though the polling streams 5 to 7 are using bigger numerals, the actual fact is that they

still represent the same age group as in polling streams 1 to 4 or 5 to 6 where the biggest numerals represent the youngest voters.

Generally, the young voters or the first time voters are those who are still at the colleges or universities or just completing their studies. Being exposed to more competitive environment, these young voters are more aggressive in looking for information regarding certain issues, including politics. They are also more critical, open-minded and not strictly bound by any political parties or ideological groups. They are exposed to new media such as web sites, web blog, e-mail network and online news. The emergence of the 'blogger' became the main reference to young voters, thus sidelining the significance of the mainstream media. According to the research by Muhamad Nadzri and Suhaimee on 193 blogs, it was found that the web blogs inclined towards the opposition were more popular than those who supported the government.¹³

The research done also showed that 51.15 percent of the blog supported the opposition, 14.5% supported the government and only 26.4% stayed neutral, neither supporting the government nor opposition.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the study also showed that the issues discussed mostly centred on the transparency of the election (33.1%), human rights and economic equality (32.5%), and corruption and cronyism (11.3%). The study clearly showed that most of the weblogs were campaigning for the opposition. On the part of the government they failed to explain effectively the issues raised by the new media. As a result the young voters who are exposed to these media tended to lend their support to the opposition.¹⁵

The young voters also tend to compare the situation of the country with others. They are more idealistic in looking at the practices of true democracy, the functions of the opposition in the society, the government transparency, the practice of human right and the running of the free and fair election. To this group of voters their expectation in these elements need to be uplifted at par with the developed countries or higher. On the part of the government the tendency is to maintain the status quo in order to retain their power at all costs. The response by the young voters throwing their support to the opposition, was to correct the shortcomings. In addition, the campaign by the opposition managed to attract the young voters with the slogans such as "People Coalition on the March to Putra Jaya", New Hope For Malaysia,¹⁶ 'Makkal Sakthi', 'Justice To All' and 'Toward a Caring Society'.¹⁷

Conventional Approach of Winning Support

The ruling party, as it was clearly seen still continued with the practice of regarding the opposition party as an enemy of the state and should be denied of any facility. To their perspective, the opinion of the opposition is none of their concerns since they were regarded as trying to find fault on the part of the government. In Malaysia, the opposition is not regarded as “alternative”, “second opinion”, check and balance” that should be included in policy making. To the government the people in general are still surrounded by the concept of ‘patron-client’, ‘personalism-authority’ and ‘authority-position’ as discussed by Neher, Hood and Kim.¹⁸ These concepts are already outdated such as in the case of the ‘patron-client’ concept where relations are looked upon as the patron/government imposed a full control over the client/people by offering protection. As a reward for the protection given, the client/people should respond by giving full support to the patron/government. The government reciprocated by channelling development projects to the people as a reward for their support.

The concept of ‘personalism-authority’ is more of the authority using excessive power to shape the opinion and support of the people. In this regard the opposition parties and those who are not in line with the government will be suppressed. This is implemented by using all the available laws that exist and laws promulgated to justify the actions taken. The concept of ‘authority-position’ attained by the political leaders in the society is of higher position and must be respected. The people, and in this respect the voters cannot openly oppose or criticise the government by showing their support to the opposition. The existing leaders who are represented by the ruling party should also be supported because they bring harmony and progress to the country

The concepts practised are considered extreme and out-dated. The present voters are more matured and able to differentiate the type of news that they had read. They are able to filter and analyse the information they received from the conventional media such as newspapers and television. As a result, the voters are more receptive to the news from the new media, such as sources from the websites, bloggers, sms, flyers and banner rather than depending solely from the mainstream newspapers, radio and television. Take the case during the Permatang Pauh parliamentary by-election when the mainstream media coverage on a bottle of mineral water wrapped with paper which was suspected of containing explosive. Following the findings, the mainstream television channels showed the Bomb Destroying Unit of the Malaysian Royal

Police using remote control devices to destroy the object. However, it was realised that no explosives were found and the object was only a bottle of mineral water with a few political pamphlets.¹⁹ This case clearly showed how the media tried to tarnish the image of the opposition as the polling day approached.

The mainstream media controlled by the government also purposely elaborated any incidents which implicated and tarnished the image of the opposition party in an effort to sway the voters support to the latter. The voters, however were not easily swayed by the political propaganda being fed through the mainstream media. Similar scenario happened in Kuala Terengganu parliamentary by-elections. To attract the voters in the constituency, Barisan National resorted to putting billboards showing their new roof to the needy people, petrol subsidy, and the construction of houses for the poor families and giving lap top computers to primary school children. PAS, however, reputed that all projects brought benefit to the people, since mega projects such as the organising of the Monsoon Cup, the construction of Islamic Civilisation Park and the Crystal Mosque did not benefit the people.²⁰

In these three parliamentary by-elections the information regarding the misconduct of the government was readily available on the website for the voters to make the assessment. The voters were able to filter the news and information which resulted in their decision and translated in the ballot box. Comparatively the young voters who were exposed to other media, instead of the conventional mainstream media controlled by the government were more receptive to changes. As a result these voters tended to vote for the opposition in these three parliamentary by elections.

Voters Support Based on Polling Streams

Support for the polling streams 1 and 2 normally represent the veteran voters. Meanwhile voting streams 3 and 4 represent the middle age voters and voting streams 5 and 6 representing young voters. The pattern of voting according to the voting streams in these three parliamentary by-elections is as shown in Table 4

Table 4: Support to parties based on voting streams (%)

| Parliament/Party Polling Stream | Permatang Pauh | | | Kuala Terengganu | | | Bukit Gantang | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|------|------------|------------------|------|------------|---------------|------|------------|
| | PKR | BN | Difference | PAS | BN | Difference | PAS | BN | Difference |
| Polling Stream 1 | 61.1 | 38.3 | 22.8 | 49.3 | 50.2 | 0.9 | 47.3 | 50.8 | 3.5 |
| Polling Stream 2 | 65.4 | 34.4 | 31.0 | 52.9 | 46.7 | 6.2 | 50.2 | 48.7 | 1.5 |
| Polling Stream 3 | 69.4 | 30.5 | 38.9 | 54.3 | 45.5 | 8.8 | 56.6 | 42.4 | 14.2 |
| Polling Stream 4 | 71.2 | 28.7 | 42.5 | 53.2 | 46.5 | 6.7 | 59.3 | 39.9 | 19.4 |
| Polling Stream 5 | 69.7 | 30.1 | 39.6 | 53.1 | 46.5 | 6.5 | 57.9 | 41.2 | 16.7 |
| Polling Stream 6 | - | - | - | 51.9 | 47.7 | 4.2 | 65.8 | 33.2 | 32.6 |

In Permatang Pauh, the older voters showed their support to PKR than Barisan Nasional with the percentage of 61.1% and 38.3 respectively. The difference is 22.8% for polling stream 1 and 31% for polling stream 2. Similar patterns can be seen in other polling streams including the streams that represent the younger voters which gave PKR the edge with 42.5% and 39.6% respectively, in voting streams 4 and 5. As clearly shown, the young voters gave the biggest support to PKR, about 71.2% in polling stream 4 and 69.7% in polling stream 5. Meanwhile Barisan Nasional received the lowest support of about 28.7% and 30.1% respectively in polling streams 4 and 5. The difference of support to PKR and Barisan Nasional also widened with the ascending number of the polling streams which indicated that the young voters in Permatang Pauh lend their solid support to PKR and only gave minimum support to Barisan Nasional.

The result of the Kuala Terengganu parliamentary by-election also showed the same pattern. The pattern of voting according to polling streams still showed that the older voters tend to give Barisan Nasional the edge while the younger voters showed their solid support to the opposition. Voters in polling streams 1 and 2 still show their support to Barisan Nasional even though with a small margin of difference that is about 0.9% and 6.2% respectively. The young voters in the middle number of the polling streams of 3, 4 and 5 gave a high support to PAS with the percentage of 54.3%, 53.2% and 53.1% respectively.

The scenario was rather different looking at the support given to Barisan Nasional which recorded a decline to 45.5% in polling stream 3, 46.5% in polling streams 4 and 5 as compared to 50.2% in polling stream 1 and 46.7% in polling stream 2 respectively. The polling stream where the young voters were the majority the support was to the opposition. In polling stream 6, 51.9% voted for PAS and only 47.7% voted for Barisan Nasional. The percentage of support according to the polling stream clearly showed that the bigger the numeral the greater the support given to the opposition. Despite the high percentage of young voters giving their support to PAS, the percentage of voters turnout for the group of voters is comparative low where in polling stream 6 only 71.9% turned out to vote as compared to 79.9% in polling stream 1, 83.6% polling stream 2 and 78.1% in polling stream 3.²¹

The situation, however, was a bit different in Bukit Gantang as compared to Permatang Pauh and Kuala Terengganu. In this parliamentary by-election there was a stiff competition between Barisan Nasional and PAS in polling stream 1 and 2 where the difference stood at 3.5% and 1.5% respectively in favour of the former. The different in voters' support widened as the numeral got bigger with the highest support to PAS stood at the highest of 32.6% for polling stream 6 where the young voters cast their votes. Similar occurrence happened in the polling streams where the middle age voters cast their votes. In these polling streams of 3 and 4 the competition was less intense where this category of voters showed their inclination towards the opposition. In this parliamentary by-election all polling streams, with the exception of polling stream 1, PAS managed to garner a higher percentage of support as compared to Barisan Nasional with the highest from the polling stream 6 (65.8%) and the lowest from polling stream 1 (47.3%). Likewise, Barisan Nasional managed to garner the high percentage votes from polling stream 1 at 50.8% as compared to PAS at 47.3%. With the exception of these streams, PAS managed to secure a higher percentage of support from all other streams.

The Shaping of Malaysian Politics

The voting patterns of young voters in Permatang Pauh, Kuala Terengganu and Bukit Gantang parliamentary by-elections show the tendency of young voters to support the opposition (PKR and PAS). The veteran voters, however showed their voting intention more clearly to the party that they prefer. Comparatively this category of voters are more firm in their stand and support to a particular party as compared to young voters. The reason for the flexibility

of support by young voters is easy to explain. They were the group of voters who were exposed to new media and more dynamic in their thinking.

The defeat suffered by Barisan Nasional represented by UMNO in these three by-elections clearly showed the mood of Malaysian voters towards the ruling party. With the current scenario probably many parliamentary seats won by Barisan Nasional with a slim majority (below 2000) are extremely vulnerable in the coming election. Following the poor showing of support to UMNO in 1999, new election boundaries were created by Election Commission. Even though the commission is supposed to be neutral, it is a known fact that the body tend to favour the ruling government. In the general election it was identified that the Malay support towards Barisan Nasional was wavering and the ruling party managed to get solid support from the ethnic Chinese and Indian voters. From the pattern of the election results it seems clear that the opposition party were facing difficulty in winning the mixed seats. As a result, in the alienation exercise in 2003 and used in the 2004 general election a bigger number of parliamentary seats were created with the general formula of 60-70 percent Malay voters and the remaining 30-40 percent made up of non Malay voters, particularly in the west coast states of the Peninsular Malaysia.

The formula created by the Election commission and sanctioned by the ruling party worked extremely well in the 2004 Malaysian General Election. In the election the Barisan Nasional coalition managed to secure 63.8 percent of the popular votes, but managed to secure 90.4 percent of 219 parliamentary seats. The winning formula created proved not workable in the 2008 general election when the opposition parties, namely PKR, PAS and DAP managed to bury their political and ideological differences and led by Anwar Ibrahim to form a loose election pact known as Pakatan Rakyat. In the 2008 general election the opposition parties managed to win most of the mixed seats supposed to be the ruling government stronghold.

The next delineation exercise is due in 2011 after 8 years of the last exercise. Since the demarcation of electoral boundaries involves constitutional changes the ruling party needs the approval of the two thirds majority in the parliament. With the ruling party not having the required numbers it seems unlikely that the new boundaries proposed by the Election Commission will be accepted by the law-makers. To the opposition they prefer to maintain the status quo since the indication from the by-elections clearly show that it worked in their favour.

Conclusion

The results of the three parliamentary by-elections clearly show that the people/voters are not with the ruling party which has governed Malaysia since independence. Despite several efforts used to woo the voters, particularly the young ones, Barisan Nasional particularly UMNO still fail to impress them. The prevailing scenario is rather alarming to the ruling party in the run up to the 13th Malaysian General Election. The outcome of the three parliamentary by-elections, namely Permatang Pauh, Kuala Terengganu and Bukit Gantang clearly showed that the Coalition of People's opposition or Pakatan Rakyat is maintaining the momentum of the "political tsunami" of 8th March 2008 and aggressively campaigning for the political take over of Putraya, the Malaysian administrative capital.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ "Deputy Education Minister Razali Dies", *Malaysiakini*, 28 November 08, <http://malaysiakini.com/news/93963>.
- ² *Pilihan Raya Kecil Bukit Gantang, Bukit Selambau Serentak*, 7 April 2009 – 13 Februari 2009, <<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v5/bm/newsindex.php?id=389498>. Lihat juga, "PAS MP Roslan Shaharum Dies", *Malaysiakini*, 9 Februari, <http://malaysiakini.com/news/97917>.
- ³ *Pilihan Raya Kecil P36 Kuala Terengganu*, <<http://www.spr.gov.my>>
- ⁴ Tiga ADUN yang melompat parti adalah Jamaluddin Mohd Radzi (Behrang/PKR), Mohd Osman Mohd Jailu (Changkat Jering/PKR) dan Hee Yit Foong (Jelapang/DAP). "K'jaan Pakatan Rakyat Bergoncang", *Malaysiakini*, 4 Februari 09, <http://malaysiakini.com/news/97568>.
- ⁵ Negeri yang berjaya dimenangi oleh Pakatan Rakyat adalah Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Pulau Pinang dan berjaya mengekalkan kejayaan di Kelantan.
- ⁶ Lihat laman web Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (SPR) untuk statistik rasmi di, "Statistik Asas Bagi Pilihan Raya Umum Ke-12, http://www.spr.gov.my/index_files/galeri_infomasi/statistik/STATISTIKPRU12.pdf.
- ⁷ Ong Kian Ming, Making Sense of the Political Tsunami, *Malaysiakini*, 11 Mac 09, <http://malaysiakini.com/news/79604>.
- ⁸ Abdul Rashid Moten., 2009, '2008 General Elections in Malaysia : Democracy at Work', *Japanese Journal Of Political Science*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp.21-42
- ⁹ Mohammad Redzuan Othman, Zulkanain Abdul Rahman, Shaharudin Badaruddin, Amer Saifude Ghazali dan Md. Rozimi Mohd. Nasir, 2009, *Permatang Pauh: Pilihan Raya Kecil Ogos 2008*, Karisma Publications Sdn. Bhd. dan Jabatan Sejarah Universiti Malaya, Shah Alam, hlm.3.
- ¹⁰ *Saya Akan Rindukan Kalian*, 7 Ogos 2008, < <http://www.khalid-jaafar.org>>. Lihat juga, "Anwar ke Parlimen 'Seawal Pagi Esok' ", *Malaysiakini*, 26 Ogos 09, <http://malaysiakini.com/news/88642>.
- ¹¹ Mohammad Redzuan Othman, Zulkanain Abdul Rahman, Shaharudin Badaruddin, Amer Saifude Ghazali dan Md. Rozimi Mohd. Nasir, 2009, *Permatang Pauh: Pilihan Raya Kecil Ogos 2008*, Karisma Publications Sdn. Bhd. dan Jabatan Sejarah Universiti Malaya, Shah Alam, hlm. 107.
- ¹² *Profil Kawasan Parlimen Kuala Terengganu*, <http://www.bharian.com.my/klikhas/cterengganu/artikel/profil_kawasan>
- ¹³ Muhammad Nadzri Mohamed Noor dan Suhaimie Saahar, 2008, 'Blogosphere: Ruang kontra hegemoni? Analisis terhadap blog politik Malaysia terpilih dalam PRU 2008', Dalam Worrn Hj. Kabul, Shireen Haron, Mat Zin Mat Kib, Abdul Kadir Rosline, *Seminar Politik Malaysia*, Universiti Teknologi Mara Sabah dan Institut Kualiti dan Pengembangan Ilmu, Kota Kinabalu, hlm. 59-68.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Lihat Juga ' Blogger Tersohor Bantu Kempen Calon PAS', *Hujjah*, 3 April 2009, hlm.37

¹⁶ Untuk mengetahui lebih lanjut sila layari web Parti Keadilan Rakyat, <http://www.keadilanrakyat.org/index.php/content/view/544/>

¹⁷ Untuk slogan 'Negara Berkebajikan' pula sila layari, *Harakahdaily*, http://www.harakahdaily.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12583&Itemid=115

¹⁸ Neher, C.D., 1994, 'Asian style democracy', *Asian Survey*, vol. 34, no.11, pp. 949-961; Hood, S.J., 1998, 'The myth of Asian style democracy', *Asian Survey* vol 38, no. 9, pp. 853-866; Kim, Y.M., 1997, 'Asian style democracy: a critique from East Asia', *Asian Survey* vol. 37, no. 12, pp. 1119-1134.

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²⁰ Mohammad Redzuan Othman, 2009, 'Makna sebalik poster dan kain rentang pilihan raya kecil parlimen Kuala Terengganu', *Prosiding Bengkel Pilihan Raya Kecil Parlimen P36 Kuala Terengganu Januari 2009*, Kumpulan Penyelidik Kajian Demokrasi dan Pilihan Raya Malaysia, Jabatan Sejarah, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, hlm. 38-65.

²¹ Amer Saifude Ghazali. 2009, 'Analisis pola pengundian pilihan raya kecil parlimen Kuala Terengganu', *Prosiding Bengkel Pilihan Raya Kecil Parlimen P36 Kuala Terengganu Januari 2009*, Kumpulan Penyelidik Kajian Demokrasi dan Pilihan Raya Malaysia, Jabatan Sejarah, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, hlm. 128-147.

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July 2009