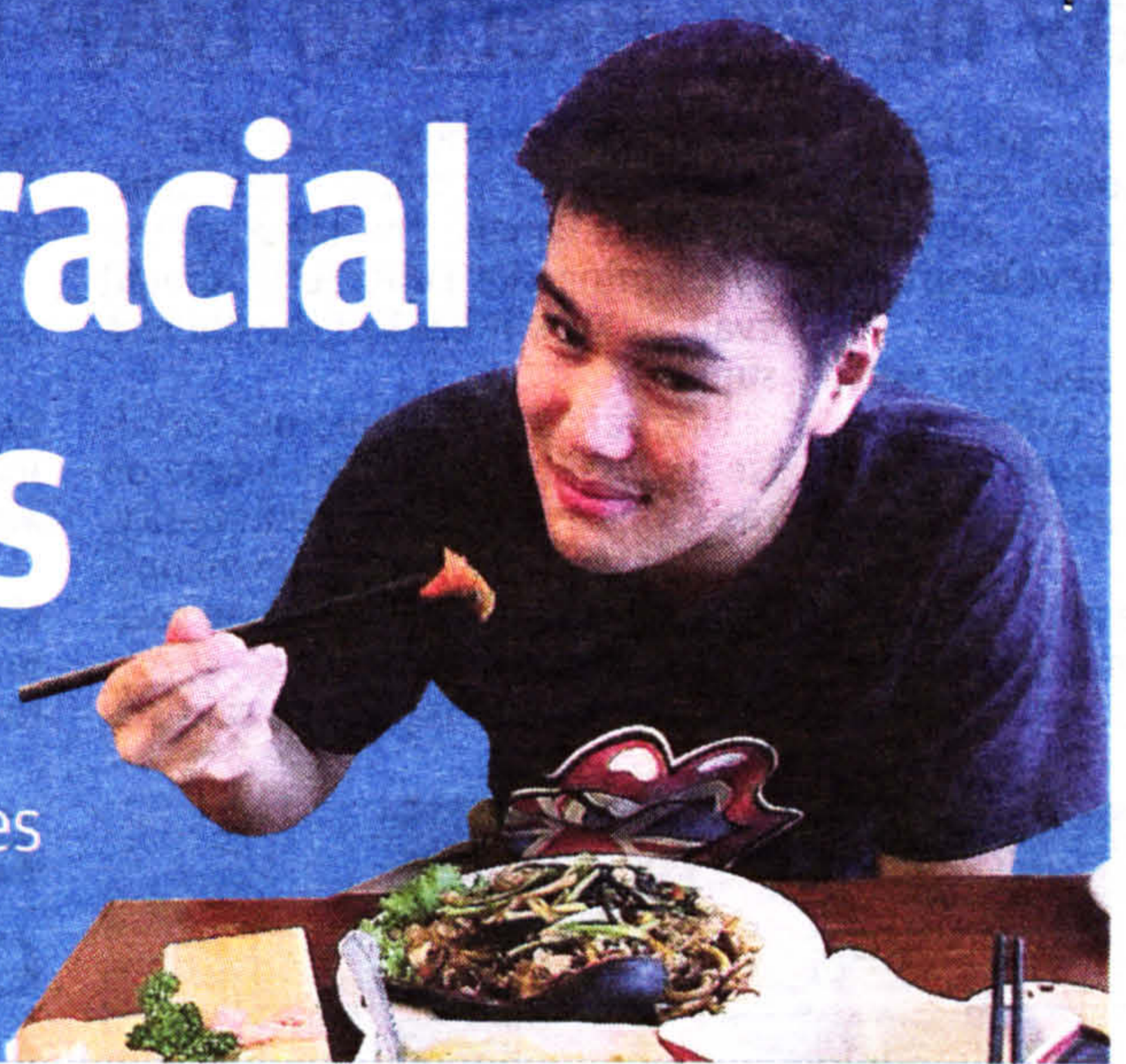


Midin Salad by YU JI

No to racial politics

For a better nation, politicians themselves should stop talking about race.



JUST say no to racial politics. Period. Too much of the post-general election talk has been on the Chinese deserting Barisan Nasional. This is a wrong assessment. It is a misreading of the election results.

Malaysian Chinese comprise roughly 25% of the national population. On polling day, Pakatan Rakyat received 50.87% of the popular vote nationwide. Taking away Sarawak and Sabah, in Peninsular Malaysia alone, Pakatan actually had a 53.29% share of the popular votes.

Clearly, Malaysians of other ethnicities – besides the Chinese – also voted for Pakatan in droves. There are no Chinese majority states in Malaysia.

In Penang, where DAP won all of the seats it contested, less than half of the population are Chinese at 46.5%.

In Kuala Lumpur, where Pakatan won resoundingly, Chinese comprise 43% of the population.

Statements of a Chinese tsunami are simply not factual.

Such statements also grossly exaggerate the electoral power of a single race. And for what reason?

In a Malaysia society, it does not matter what skin colour my MP has, in the same way that it does not matter whether my MP is male or female, or whether he or she is an Apple or Android phone user.

Singling out race as the reason for losses in an election is to signify a bankruptcy of better ideas.

The turning of the tide was based on a sentiment of change rather than a racial decision.

Critics of DAP are also glossing over a very strong sense of patriotism found at the opposition rallies throughout the campaigning period.

It is in poor taste for Barisan officials to say things like: "The real losers in this general election in Sarawak are not SUPP or Sarawak Barisan, but the urban folk, especially the urban Chinese."

It is exactly this kind of comments that is turning away urban voters from Barisan.

Instead, a better assessment of the results is for Barisan to concede it needs to rethink its own race-based parties.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak political communications and history lecturer Dr Jeniri Amir told me the accusations by Barisan officials of DAP moving along racial lines was, essentially, hypocrisy.

Jeniri said urban voters voted for DAP because they wanted a Pakatan government.

Similarly, urban voters who wanted a Barisan government would have had to vote for parties like MCA, which is exclusively Chinese, or Gerakan or SUPP, which are Chinese majority parties anyway.

"It is completely wrong to make those kinds of allegation," Jeniri said. "It is about making a choice to get to a destination, to turn left or right. The urban voters wanted a Pakatan government so they knew they had to ensure DAP candidates win," he said.

Political analyst and writer Karim Raslan is bent on rubbishing the belief that racial polarisation caused Barisan's defeat in urban seats.

"The actual polarisation is between the urban, sub-urban groups and their rural counterparts," Karim said.

The general election result was not racial at all, Karim tweeted on May 6.

The "tsunami" was geographical, social-economics, with cities and towns mostly in Peninsular Malaysia and rural Malaysia in Sarawak and Sabah, he said, making a point that the election results demarcated rather clearly between the haves and have-nots.

If Malaysians were to continue buying into the fear-mongering of divisive politics, then the real issues will not be talked about.

For instance, International Islamic University of Malaysia lecturer Prof Datuk Seri Syed Arabi Idid has said voters surveyed indicated they would vote for whichever party or coalition that had the best economy performance and plans.

Arabi also said tackling crime was high on Malaysians' wish list.

The tragedy of the post-election talk so far is that it still sounds remarkably like pre-election talk. Whatever Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak intends to do in his "national reconciliation" plan to heal rifts, the Prime Minister will be fighting a losing battle if Barisan's own members and supporters continue to play the race card.

Worrying trend: Handicapped Stephen Lau, 43, from the Sarawak Chesire Home in Kuching is pictured after casting his vote on Sunday. Such exercise of democratic rights will be meaningless for Malaysians, more so for needy people like Lau, if racial politics is allowed to fester. — Bernama

