PAS should get the message

THE National Front's victory in the Bukit Raya state by-election has dealt a severe blow to PAS hopes of extending its influence in Kedah.

Bukit Raya had been a major PAS stronghold. PAS had held it since 1969, and its retention was vital towards realisation of the party's ambition to capture the state in the next General Election. This hope has been shattered. Signifficantly, Bukit Raya is part of the Kota Star Parliamentary constituency - one of the two Parliamentary in Kedah held by PAS.

Having been virtually wiped out in Kelantan, PAS must now rethink the policies that have led to the erosion of its new base in Kedah.

Nevertheless the National Front triumphed against odds, as attested by the fuel that victory could have gone either way - the Front's candidate, Haji Safirol bin Haji Hashim, defeating his PAS rival, Ustaz Fadzil Noor, by only 69 votes, Barely two years ago, PAS won the seat with a majority of 1,101 votes.

What made the Bukit Raya electorate turn away from PAS? It is apparent that the politics of religion has begun to lose its grip on the people. Contrary to what some PAS leaders had claimed, the party's involvement in the underground Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabiullah (P.A. S.) vwm not without some adverse effect at the polls. Moreover, PAS' attempt to capitalise on the padi subsidy extent. And the big turn out at the polls (81.88 per cent) would appear to have favoured The National Front, In this connection, most of the Chinese voters, who had helped PAS win Bukit Raya in 1978, almost certainly voted for the National Front on Saturday.

But most of all, the people's disenchantment with PAS may be attributed to the fact that they have come to realise that their future lies with the National Front which has delivered its promises and brought development and security to the State. The economic and social progress in Kedah bears eloquent testimony to these efforts.

The National Front, however, cannot afford to rest on its laurels. PAS has proved to be a cunning and resilient adversary. It will 'Do or die' in Kedah, and in not above employing any means that would enable it to survive. As recent development have shown, this could include an insidious subversion of the body politic.