

# Breaking into poetry at ceramahs

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KUCHING: Friendly repartee and banter in the tradition of the Malay *berbalas pantun* have added colour to the campaign trail in Malay-majority areas.

Barisan Nasional and opposition Parti Keadilan Nasional speakers at *ceramah* appear to be taking this gentler approach to win the hearts of voters.

The verses range from those enticing the voters with sugary words to caustic ones criticising their opponents.

For example, Keadilan Youth exco member Abdul Ghani Harun broke into a *pantun* to explain at a *ceramah* in Satok on Tuesday why the peninsula-based party is campaigning in Sarawak.

Kalau tidak kerana bulan,  
Tak kan bintang terbit tinggi,  
Kalau tidak kerana tuan/puan  
Tak kan saya datang kemari

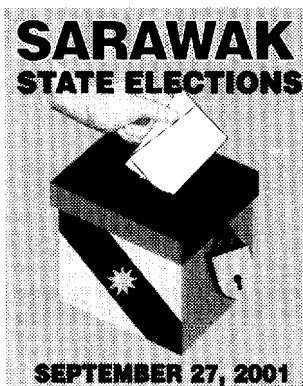
(If not for the moon,  
The stars will not light the sky  
If not for you,

I would not be passing by)

The Barisan camp was quick to retort the following day at its *ceramah* at the same place:

Kain usang lapek permaidani

Mari disusun si anak janda  
Buat apa Keadilan kesini



*Kalau tidak* memporak peranda”

(A ragged cloth laid ‘neath a carpet

Neatly arranged by a widow’s daughter

There’s no reason for Keadilan here

Except to see chaos asunder)

An Umno leader said this could be an attempt by the opposition to emulate Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad’s “soft approach” through a rendition of a poem entitled *Melayu Mudah Lupa* at the Umno general assembly.

This approach may provide much laughter at the *ceramah* but it may have a bearing on how the voter thinks.