

**Muhyiddin comes bearing gifts of cows**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**March 5, 2011**

Malacca Chief Minister Mohd Ali Rustam said on nomination day that announcing by-election goodies, especially in the form of "already budgeted" projects and allocations, is normal since it is polite to visit a home bearing gifts.

Flying into Merlimau via helicopter on the last day of campaign, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin has heeded his advice.

And given that Merlimau produces the second largest amount of cow milk in Malaysia, it is only appropriate that he came bearing gifts of cows - two each for eight dairy farmers.

However, Muhyiddin was several cows short and this has upset some of the farmers.

A disgruntled dairy farmer P Sathia, 27, showed Malaysiakini a Feb 19 letter where Mohd Ali had agreed that 16 recipients selected by the veterinary department should have received the cows several weeks ago.

Sixteen cows did make it to Kampung Sungai Buloh on the eve of the Merlimau by-election, said dairy farmer Maria Soosay, 37.

But the selected recipients of the first batch of eight farmers have left many others baffled.

"At first, the JKKK (village committee) members said that we cannot ask for anything because we're Sungai Rambai constituents, but then we checked and found many of us are Merlimau voters.

"So they said they're willing to give cows. But they gave the cows to the wrong people... to people without dairy farms, to JKKK members," decried Soosay.

**Conditions for recipients**

According to Soosay, the veterinary department had set strict conditions for the recipients, requiring that they have proper cowsheds, enough hay and to make sure that the cows do not roam around.

The department also said that it would prioritise farmers who produce the most milk, he added.

This is corroborated by JKKK member R Rajendran, who admitted to be in charge of the selection of the recipients, and who himself have received two cows along with seven other farmers in the first batch.

"There is no problem. Only DAP is trying to look for issues," he said, while confessing that he is a hardcore BN supporter.

Interestingly, Rajendran has only six cows, fewer than those spotted by Malaysiakini at farms belonging to the disgruntled farmers.

One of the sidelined farmers has 70 cows in his farm, and he told Malaysiakini that even though he does not mind not getting the two cows, he felt the government should fulfill its promises made to the people.

Whether or not the offering of the cows will quell the frustrations of the dairy farmers remains to be seen as Merlimau hits the polls tomorrow.

"They know that if they give us something, we'll feel happy. But now we're unhappy, you know what will happen, right?" said Soosay.

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