

**Muhyiddin: Merlimau win a message for general polls**  
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BN's win in Merlimau is not just about retaining its grip on their stronghold, but that the significant 3,643 margin is an endorsement of the prime minister and an indicator of upcoming polls, says Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

"If possible, this trend should continue until the 13th general election. The results can be translated into the context of the general polls, but I don't know when it will be called.

"The important thing is to sustain this feel good factor. This is a by-election, so it does not give a fair representation of the national scenario. But all the same, I feel we should take heed of its message," he said.

Among the messages from BN's success in raising their majority beyond 2008's 2,541, said Muhyiddin, is that Malay voters have regained their faith in the coalition as have the Indian voters.

BN took all the voting streams in the seven polling districts in Merlimau, including Permatang Serai, Chinchin and Pengkalan Samak that all have more than 60 percent Malay voters.

In Pengkalan Samak, where Malay voters make up 82.6 percent of total voters, the coalition more than doubled the votes gained by PAS, including among youth voters, whom the opposition party had banked its hopes on.

According to Muhyiddin, the results show that voters have rejected Pakatan Rakyat's Orange Book as well as PAS' notion of an Islamic state.

He added that it also showed that the voters see through the coalition of convenience to realise that unlike BN, PAS is not really championing their interests but rather the party's own political interests.

"I think (DAP, PAS and PKR) are all just using each other," he said.

**Indian vote swing**

Through leaflets and ceramahs, BN had campaigned hard for the 64.9 percent Malay voters, taking an aggressive stance by portraying PAS as a deviant and extremist party.

It also pushed hard on the campaign message that PAS cannot safeguard the interests of Malays, as the DAP is keen to take over the country and is using PAS as its political tool.

Defence Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi capitalised on the win to support the stance, saying the results show that the winds of change is blowing back in BN's direction.

"We have won the same amount of by-elections as the opposition, which shows that the people are returning in their support for us, unlike what the opposition would like to say," he said when met.

Significantly, PAS candidate Yuhaizad Abdullah only managed to garner about 26 percent of votes in his homeground of Chinchin.

Perhaps the most apparent swing in Merlimau is among the Indian voters. For example in Jasin Lalang, that has the largest percentage of Indian voters, PAS managed to only gain about 18 percent of the votes there, compared to about 41 percent in 2008.

BN had focused on the Indian community in the tail end of the campaign, with the use of machinery from Indian based junior coalition members like the Makkal Sakti Party and Indian Muslim Association (Kimma) as well as MIC, that threw a lot of funds in Merlimau's direction.

The local Indian community was also heavily guarded by BN, with Pakatan campaigners complaining that they could not enter the oil palm estates to meet the Indian voters.

On the flipside, Pakatan also did not have much of a strategy to win over Indian voters, who were for a large portion of the campaign neglected as PAS and DAP focused their energies on the Malay and Chinese voters respectively.

### **Chinese votes still elusive**

However, Muhyiddin admitted that despite winning the polling district of Ayer Merbau (that has the highest percentage of Chinese voters), many in the community are still wary of the coalition.

"There is a slight increase in Chinese votes but not as much as the other races, which means that we have to work harder to make them understand our policies," he said.

About 35.5 percent of voters in Ayer Merbau voted for PAS but it is difficult to know exactly how many of Merlimau's 20.8 percent of Chinese voters opted for BN, as many of the polling districts are mixed areas.

For Chief Minister Mohd Ali Rustam, who had given Roslan a big bear hug upon his victory, the large winning margin is a relief and, he says, is proof of his prowess as a state administrator and a hands-on leader.

"I did not worry about losing, but I worried about winning with a small majority, so I told constituents that If they give us a small majority it would be tough for me to work hard for them.

"But now the majority is high so it should be no problem," he said, beaming.

The win is significant for Mohd Ali, both in the lead up to the general polls and also to his political career as he climbs the Umno ladder.

### **BN loads to live up to**

Mohd Ali, who had campaigned hard as Merlimau by-election director as well as the CM, will have his hands full meeting with all the campaign promises, that he had audaciously said he would deliver only if votes came BN's way.

Keeping an eye on him will undoubtedly be defeated PAS candidate Yuhaizad.

"As a politician, I don't feel disappointed or sad but will continue to monitor BN to make sure that they fulfill all their promises. I will also continue to look into what the voters need," said the PAS Jasin leader.

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