

Vote fishing at official gov't function

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Ruling coalition BN appears to be kicking off its campaign for the 13th general election early by using official government events as a platform to rally support.

An example of this was the walkabout in selected Selangor constituencies by Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin (left), which had the DPM clearly calling for support for BN to win over Selangor in the next polls.

At a town hall meeting in the Ampang parliamentary constituency, Muhyiddin said BN has always put the people first and as such, the obvious choice come elections is BN.

"The rakyat can choose whoever they see fit. In Selangor they have chosen the opposition... maybe they were mistaken.

"For almost 54 years BN has always provided allocations for the needy... and this is taken into consideration by the rakyat.

"During elections, the rakyat will think of which government has prioritised the wants of the rakyat and this government is none other than BN," he said to applause from about 500 people at a school hall in the Lembah Jaya state constituency.

As proof of the government's concern for the people, he said, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak would soon make an announcement on a new policy to help them cope with rising inflation.

Counting seats

More obvious was the speech by Agriculture Minister and BN Selangor liaison committee liaison deputy chairperson Noh Omar.

"We need at least 30 seats in the Selangor assembly to take over as state government (and) we have only 21 seats.

"Where will we find the nine more seats, on top of defending the 21? Ampang has two state seats, Lembah Jaya and Bukit Antarabangsa... can we win Lembah Jaya?" Noh (left) asked, to affirmation from the crowd.

However, asked at a press conference later if it was appropriate to deliver political speeches in a school hall, Muhyiddin said that it is "biasa" (normal).

"It is not wrong. It is not an election campaign period, and my speech was about government policies, and the government of the day is BN.

"It is normal. I can't be asking people to support others," he said.

Nevertheless, Muhyiddin added that it was part of BN's strategy to wrest back power from Pakatan Rakyat in Selangor.

"We have identified areas that we believe we can win back... we know it's an uphill battle and Pakatan will not give in easily.

"That's why I advise my colleagues to go to the ground to rally support which, hopefully, will sustain until the next polls, and we will then have the chance to win."

Muhyiddin, who is also education minister, began his day with breakfast in Kuala Langat - a constituency held by PKR - where he also visited several schools.

He is later scheduled to visit residential houses in Ampang, another area held by PKR, and will proceed to Pandan, a BN constituency, for a 1Malaysia dinner tonight.

Endorsement from experts

In his speech earlier, the deputy premier took a swipe at the opposition, labelling their Buku Jingga (100-day common policy manifesto) as an "irresponsible pipedream".

"Some people remind me that it is actually 'Buku Jing-gay'," he said, chuckling.

But the government does not take it lightly and has reviewed it in detail to see if the policies can be implemented."

He said that even economic experts have said that, if Buku Jingga is implemented, the country will go bankrupt.

"They say they will lower petrol and diesel prices, but how? Subsidies cost the government RM14 billion already and reducing prices further will require about RM30 billion.

"Do they have a magic lamp that can grant them the wish for RM30 billion? They are irresponsible in making these suggestions."

As he did in Kuala Langat, Muhyiddin took potshots at DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang, who has derided the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) as mere rhetoric.

"Kit Siang says it's all lies and that it's a political ploy. But if he knew how to read (the GTP annual report), he would see the facts in black and white," he added.

'International experts' endorsed the GTP

At the press conference, Muhyiddin said the government had pre-empted Lim's criticism by presenting the programme to "international experts" for endorsement.

"We called experts from the World Bank, former presidents of (corruption watchdog) Transparency International to Putrajaya... and they have verified that the programme has credibility, (and) is a big achievement by the government.

"Our plans are not built on clouds but on solid ground... and if the rakyat terpedaya (falls into the trap) of Buku Jingga, then (the opposition) will be in power for five years but (the policy promises) cannot be implemented."

Also present today were Rural Development Minister Shafie Apdal, Deputy Finance Minister Donald Lim, Deputy Foreign Minister A Kohilan Pillay and former transport minister Ong Tee

Keat.

In the audience were members of Rela, NGOs, government agencies and Umno, as well as tok batin (Orang Asli village chiefs) and village security committee heads.

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