

'Najib, you are very beautiful'
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COMMENT If all the world's a stage, as stated by Shakespeare, then Penang was one big stage for Barisan Nasional politicians on Saturday.

After receiving a memorandum from 500 taxi drivers who pledged to display the 1Malaysia logo on their vehicles at the Penang airport, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak slipped into the role of entertainer during an outing with Balik Pulau residents.

The mainly Malay Muslim crowd who greeted him in the sweltering heat was undoubtedly double the number of those who met him during his previous visits to the island. This was noted by Balik Pulau Umno chief and Teluk Bahang assemblyperson Dr Hilmi Yahya.

The majority of them were students sporting turquoise uniforms or batik, and came from all over the state by free busses provided by Rapid Penang.

But the cheerful crowd was not the only sight that pleased the BN and Umno chief, who was in Penang for a full working day tour on the eve of his second anniversary as Malaysia's 6th PM.

Whether amused or bemused, Najib recounted an incident where a Chinese woman had come up to him and said he was 'very beautiful' (sangat cantik).

"I just want to say... my wife is not angry as long as the woman is 60 years and above," he joked, drawing laughter from the crowd.

"My wife is not here. She sends her greetings. But there's a big picture of her here, I do not forget my wife," he added, referring to the huge banner on stage depicting the first couple.

During his speech, Najib even tried to crack a 'dirty' joke when relating his visit to Rifle Range, where he spoke about the water pressure in the flats being low and annoying.

"I turn the head of the taps and not much water comes out... we need to pump in more pressure," he told the audience, then broke into a chuckle, "Please don't think of another head (when I speak about water coming out)".

Prelude to the next big event

But this was only a prelude to the next big event that Najib would attend at the Penang International Sports Arena, courtesy of the Penang Indian Development Organisation (Pido) - a newly-formed NGO headed by former PKR division leader M Nyana Segaran.

A host of BN leaders including Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Information, Communications and Culture Minister Rais Yatim, state Gerakan chief Dr Teng Hock Nan and MIC liaison committee chairperson PK Subbaiyah graced the event, which was organised by Pido.

A political novice from a BN-friendly political party described the event, attended by about 500 participants from all over Penang, as the "largest frog festival" in the history of the

country.

A mainstream journalist who brought his family to the event, thinking that it would be a real carnival, expressed disappointment that the function turned to ashes when speakers like Bayan Baru MP Zahrain Mohamed Hashim started bashing PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim instead of speaking about the welfare of the Indian community.

Although many clay pots to warm milk, part of the Ponggal festival to honour the earth and its harvest, were lined up at the front of the event venue, not many actually took part in the ritual, not were the audience entertained by good performers.

Many felt that the political focus of the event actually hijacked the pure intentions of the gathering, which was supposed to be a festival to promote Indian culture.

The veteran journalist was thankful that he eventually took his wife and 12-year-old daughter to a shopping complex nearby to prevent them from being bored to death with all the political shenanigans of Nyana Segaran (right in picture), who later declared he was quitting PKR after having denied it for two straight days.

He then handed over copies of quit letters from 3,226 former PKR members to Najib, who is also the BN and Umno chief, citing disenchantment towards PKR's leadership and struggle as the reason for their dramatic departure.

Zahrain did not help either when most of his speech centred around Anwar being "a liar who was bent on using others to get his way to the top leadership of the country".

"The people are bored with all these lies," he said, turning around to praise Najib as the Father of Malaysian Transformation.

"There will be transformation in Penang," he added, before quickly adding that he did not want to sound as if he were trying to "bodek" (curry favour with) Najib.

"He is already handsome... but that is not the issue, the real issue is he is willing to defend the people, not like the one who is always bluffing the people," Zahrain stressed, coming back to aim his missiles at Anwar.

Anwar continues to haunt BN

From the various events in Penang organised around Najib's visit, it was clear that the obsession with Anwar, the embattled opposition leader, continues to haunt BN leaders as his name pops up in every speech, every address.

However, this tactic seems to be less convincing among the people who now tend to sympathise with the former deputy prime minister, especially after a sex video purportedly showing him in a sexual tryst with a prostitute was exposed by individuals closely linked to Umno.

Said a young political activist who feels disgusted at the current state of affairs in the country, "BN must fall, it is not learning from its mistakes. BN hits out at PKR about its many resignations which, to me, feels like a cleaning process (for the party).

"Initially it may give PKR a bad impression but after the frogs are gone, it would be a good thing for the party, good in the long run," added Dalbinder Singh, who recently became

disillusioned with Gerakan and Parti Cinta Malaysia, and is now not aligned with any political party.

"Let the populist PKR win the next election. It is a joke that BN graces public events with 'frogs' then condemns PKR," he laughed.

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