

Cracks appear in Umno fortress of Felda Palong
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PKR's foray into the Felda Palong scheme in Negri Sembilan over the last six months appears to be paying political dividends.

Support for the party has warmed up considerably, going by the size of crowds at ceramah sessions that featured de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, deputy president Azmin Ali and Women's wing head Zuraida Kamaruddin.

PKR has won over the settlers mainly by supporting their causes and issues that have led to legal suits being filed against Felda.

Last night, it was the turn of PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who addressed several hundred settlers at Felda Palong 6, one of the 16 that make up the cluster in the scheme that has been a BN fortress.

Wan Azizah also witnessed the setting up of PKR branches in Felda Palong 7 and 8, and accepted membership forms from 50 people.

A surprise element was the warm reception she received from the Felda Palong 5 mosque committee - whose members usually comprise Umno supporters - at special thanksgiving prayer for Anwar's acquittal on the sodomy charge on Jan 9.

PKR hosted a high tea after the prayers, marking another 'first' in such events for Pakatan Rakyat.

Growing PKR membership

Wan Azizah in her speech highlighted the unfairness of Umno's relentless attacks on Anwar.

"There are much more important issues plaguing Malaysia, such as mismanagement of money and scandals running into millions of ringgit, involving the National Feedlot Corporation as well, and misuse of zakat (tithe) funds ...

"Yet Umno is more concerned about slandering Anwar every night. We are a rich country with natural resources like crude oil.

"We should upgrade the living standards of the people and their education level."

Felda Palong lies in the Palong state constituency, now represented by Umno's Aziz Samsuddin.

The state seat falls within the Jempol parliamentary seat, which is held by local Umno leader Lilah Yasin.

Two years ago, when Anwar visited Felda Palong 10, about 70 people - including the organising committee - turned up to hear him speak.

Last November, 2,000 people showed up in Felda Palong 6 at a ceramah by Anwar. He repeated, at least twice then, that he couldn't believe the size of the crowd.

At that event, 412 settlers submitted membership forms to join PKR. Felda Palong 6 now has the largest number of PKR members within the Palong state seat.

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