

Sembrong an echo of Ijok, says PKR leader
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Terence Netto

In the reckoning of Syed Hamid Ali, the PKR information chief for Johor, the incident-marred ceramah his party experienced in Sembrong last Sunday was an echo of the not-long-ago past when forays into BN-held bastions were violently resisted, only for them to subside into defeat.

“As context, you must remember the Ijok by-election in April 2007,” recalled Syed Hamid, younger brother of Syed Husin Ali, the former PKR deputy president and current Senator from Selangor.

Syed Hamid, a veteran observer of the tides in Malaysian politics over 40-plus years, was referring to the by-election held there 11 months before the political tsunami of March 2008.

This by-election saw BN beat back a stiff challenge for the seat mounted by PKR through its treasurer Khalid Ibrahim, who went on to win the seat in the general election and become Pakatan Rakyat’s menteri besar for Selangor.

“Our campaigners were not allowed to go into some MIC strongholds in Ijok,” said Syed Hamid.

“Goons obviously in the pay of the ruling party barred our entry into poor settlements where the villagers had no water and electricity,” Hamid continued.

“What happened after that?” asked Hamid rhetorically.

“Hardly a year later, the same strongholds fell to the tide that favoured the opposition,” he noted.

At the PKR ceramah last Sunday in Sembrong, deep in the heart of Umno territory, youthful hoodlums stoned PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim’s car and roughed up party supporters while police watched in the shadows.

“We had to tell our supporters who outnumbered the attackers to stay calm in the face of provocations,” related Hamid.

Felda settlers are awakening

Hamid claimed the mainstream media downplayed the size of the crowd that turned up for the ceramah.

“They estimated the crowd at about 400 to 500 people but the truth was that it was somewhere between 2,000 to 3,000 people,” claimed Syed Hamid.

“There were all three races present with a high proportion of Indians from nearby settlements,” he said.

“Besides the size of the crowd, there was also their youth to consider. Many were from the younger set and this was what was encouraging about the whole attendance,” he noted.

Syed Hamid said there were signs that Felda settlers and young voters are awakening to the issues that PKR and Pakatan Rakyat in general have raised and publicised in the alternative media.

“No longer are the people of Johor considered indifferent to the impact of these issues on their consciousness. I think the Johor voter is stirring out of apathy.

“That is why we drew a sizeable crowd in Sembrong last Sunday and that is why we suspect hired goons were ordered to disrupt our gathering but they did not succeed because concern for the issues overrode

personal safety concerns,” opined Syed Hamid.

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