

Spike in voter numbers also in BN seats

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A spike in the number of voters has not just been recorded in seats held by Pakatan Rakyat, but also in Umno's parliamentary constituencies of Gua Musang and Pekan, among others under the BN.

NONEThese are among 17 parliamentary constituencies with more than 20 percent rise in the number of voters since the 2008 general election.

The increase, which is well above the national average of 13.8 percent, is revealed in the electoral roll updated as at the last quarter of 2011.

Of the 17 seats, nine were won by Pakatan in the 12th general election - Bukit Gantang (retained by Pakatan in a by-election in 2009), Gopeng, Hulu Selangor (but regained by BN in a by-election in 2010), Selayang, Hulu Langat, Serdang, Puchong, Subang and Kota Raja.

Seven seats are in Pakatan Rakyat-ruled Selangor, three in Perak and Johor respectively, two in Pahang and one each in Kelantan and the Federal Territory of Putrajaya.

The spike in Gua Musang and Pekan comes as a surprise, as both constituencies are located in rural areas with slow population growth. In addition, these are BN strongholds where stiff political competition is not anticipated.

asli forum tengku razaleigh economy 150109 04 In Gua Musang, located in PAS-ruled Kelantan, the number of voters has gone up by 8,273, or by 28.5 percent over the last three years, pushing up the total from 28,986 to 37,259.

It has been represented by Umno veteran and former finance minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah since 1969. He retained it in 2008 with a majority of 4,394 votes, to register his ninth term as a parliamentarian.

Some grassroots Umno leaders in Gua Musang have urged Razaleigh to stop contesting the constituency, claiming that he no longer has influence. He has also supported the opposition on certain issues such as oil royalty payment to Kelantan and the Felda listing.

In Pekan, the rise in voter numbers began early last year. This is a rural town dotted with some heavy-industry factories. As at Dec 31, 2011, it had 76,741 voters, a stunning leap of 18,524 or 31.8 percent since 2008.

NONEThe seat has been in Umno president Najib Abdul Razak's firm grasp after he succeeded his father, Abdul Razak Hussein. Yet, Najib only managed to squeeze through in 1999 with a slim 241-vote majority.

His majority bounced back in the 2004 general election to 22,922 votes, and climbed to 26,464 votes in 2008.

Where the spikes are

Putrajaya, held by Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor, tops the list for growth in voter numbers, at 81 percent. This is likely due to more civil servants having changed their voting location to the administrative capital.

The Tebrau constituency, where the increase exceeds 30 percent, is held by MCA parliamentarian Teng Boon Soon who will not contest the next general election. This urban constituency, which covers part of

Johor Bahru city, is expected to be a key battlefield in Johor.

At state level, Pahang (17.9 percent), Selangor (17.3 percent), Johor (15.6 percent), Kelantan and Negeri Sembilan (14.1 percent each) have registered an increase that is higher than the national average.

The lowest rates of increase are in Sabah (10.6 percent), Kuala Lumpur (10.4 percent) and Perlis (9.2 percent).

Pakatan has been monitoring changes of voter numbers in its constituencies, claiming that the unusual spike in rural areas may due to cheating or organised transfer of voters to support BN in the next general election.

However the Election Commission has explained that this is a normal trend because Malaysians tend to register as voters at the eleventh hour.

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