

## **'Ghani - from Malay gentleman to extremist'**

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**By Kuek Ser Kuang Keng**

Incumbent Johor Menteri Besar Abdul Ghani Othman has dropped in the estimation of the DAP's Lim Kit Siang, who is taking him on for the Gelang Patah parliamentary seat in Johor.

Having initially described Ghani as a "classic Malay gentleman respected for his moderate and rational views", Lim said he has turned into someone who sounds very much like a Perkasa leader.

"I have no qualms about giving him credit for bringing development and progress to Johor in his 18 years as menteri besar," Lim told a press conference this morning.

"But he did not sound like himself in his first two pronouncements after nomination day (last Saturday)."

Lim was referring to remarks by Ghani which accused Pakatan Rakyat of attempting to create racial polarisation in Johor, and warning Chinese Malaysians that voting for Lim could result in PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang being appointed prime minister if Pakatan wins the 13th general election.

"Ghani is sounding more like Perkasa (president) Ibrahim Ali and (vice-president) Zulkifli Noordin. What he said is completely contrary to his image as a moderate, rational and level-headed political leader," Lim said.

"Is this the price that moderate leaders have to pay if they are to stay and survive in present-day Umno, whose most powerful leader is not (Umno president) Najib (Abdul) Razak but (former premier Dr) Mahathir (Mohamad, left)?"

However, Lim noted a silver lining in Ghani's rhetoric, including an admission that if Gelang Patah falls to Pakatan, it would mean also the fall of Putrajaya.

"There is no greater fillip to Pakatan than Ghani's indirect admission that the battle of Gelang Patah holds the key to Putrajaya, as the battle of Gelang Patah, battle of Johor and battle of Malaysia can be won by Pakatan," Lim said.

He reiterated that PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim will be DAP's choice of premier should Pakatan form the new federal government come May 5.

## Contrasting political messages

Also present at the press conference was DAP national publicity secretary Tony Pua, who is defending the Petaling Jaya Utara parliamentary seat in Selangor.

He pointed out the difference in message signalled by advertisements placed by the BN and Pakatan respectively in Chinese dailies today.

The BN's full-page colour advertisement warns that 'voting for DAP is equal to support for PAS' and that this will jeopardise the rights of non-Muslims.

The DAP's quarter-page colour advertisement stresses that the next generation will have a brighter future under Pakatan rule.

"One is a message of lies and negative attacks, the other is a message of hope and a better future for our children," noted Pua.

"I believe that the people of Malaysia are a discerning lot (and are) politically mature, to be able to tell the difference between lies and political assassination as opposed to hope built on facts and reasons.

"We in fact support the advertisement by MCA. We ask them to carry on spending this money because I think the rakyat today are a lot more intelligent than what MCA takes them for."

After yesterday's advertisement message that read "vote wisely, one vote for DAP, one vote for PAS" became a laughing stock with Pakatan supporters in cyberspace, it was amended today to "wrong choice, one vote for DAP, one vote for PAS".