

Pakatan flags torched, vandalised in Pasir Gudang

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DAY 4 What's happening during the election campaigns around the country today? Quotable quotes, planned events and unplanned incidents as they take place.

1.00pm - Sibul: DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng visited the Sibul Central Market, the biggest in Southeast Asia.

He was accompanied by Sibul candidate Oscar Ling and Lanang candidate Alice Lau, and spent two hours engaging hawkers and shoppers.

Yesterday, Lanang election director and Dudong state assemblyperson Yap Hoi Liong had announced that situation in the two constituencies is alarming due to vote buying, and that the chances of victory had dropped to 40 percent.

When the group arrived, all BN banners and flags hanging within the market suddenly disappeared, said Ngieng Ping Sing, the Sibul and Lanang operations director, who found a few bags full of BN banners in a corner.

No campaign posters, flags or banners are allowed inside the public market, he said, cheekily noting that Lanang candidate Tiong Thai King is the chairperson of the Sibul Municipal Council.

12.53pm - Kuala Penyu: What is advertised to be a government function is unmistakably a campaign event.

Although organised by state foundation Yayasan Sabah, with a Kuala Penyu municipal council truck and chairs in use, almost all of the 5,000 people present are in BN t-shirts.

This is BN chief Najib Abdul Razak's first stop in Sabah for the campaign, and he is going full force, starting his speech by leading the crowd to chant "Tatap BN" (Remain with BN).

Despite the fancy tents, the sound system is disrupted several times, including when Najib is speaking. On cue, the audience breaks into song to avoid the awkward silence.

Najib is here to launch Yayasan Sabah's roadshow and to inaugurate the Sungai

Sipitong bridge.

12.30pm - Selangor: Former Umno leaders Muhammad Muhammad Taib and Mohd Tamrin Ghafar has urged the 62 members and former members of Umno, who had chosen to run as Independents, to join forces with the opposition.

The duo, now PAS members, today said there is "no future in Umno" and felt that the choice of the 62 to run as Independents reflected this.

The six-para statement, issued together with Mohd Tamrin, is the first by Muhammad since he officially joined PAS yesterday.

Muhammad, also known as 'Mat Taib' and 'Mike Tyson', was Umno vice-president and Selangor menteri besar from 1986 to 1997.

Mohd Tamrin joined PAS in August last year.

12.30pm - Muar: The side-window of DAP's campaign van in Bakri was found smashed about 4am today.

It is unclear who the perpetrator is but a police report was lodged this morning.

"It is regrettable that this happened. I hope that all sides will conduct themselves respectfully for a clean general election," says incumbent Bakri MP Er Teck Hwa who is defending his seat.

12.10pm - Pasir Gudang: About 40 Pakatan flags were found to have been torched or vandalised overnight at the Pasir Gudang parliamentary constituency in Johor.

PKR candidate Dr Ahmad Faidhi Saidi says most of the flags are those of PKR and PAS, and that some are "totally burnt".

PKR has lodged a police report and urged the police and Election Commission to ensure an end to "samseng politics".

Ahmad Faidhi, who is also the state deputy PKR chief, also claims that the party has a 50 percent of winning eight or nine parliamentary seats.

"We are contesting 12 parliamentary seats, and we have a fair chance in winning the mixed seats," he says.

The seats are Segamat, Pasir Gudang, Tebrau, Johor Bahru, Sembrong, Batu Pahat,

Sekijang, Ledang and Muar.

"Seats with more than 60 percent of Malay voters are not listed as winnable seats, but we are continuing to work hard," says Ahmad Faidhi, who is contesting the Pasir Gudang seat.

10:57am: The NGO Mipas slams BN chief Najib Abdul Razak for defending Perkasa vice-president Zulkifli Noordin and asking the Indian Malaysian community to forgive him for racist statements against Hindus.

"What is most sad and disgusting is that some NGO members show their support and even kiss Zulkifli Noordin," says Mipas secretary-general S Barathidasan in a statement.

"The Indian community will fulfill Najib's request to forget ... by forgetting to mark a cross on his name in the ballot paper," Barathidasan says.

He says that an apology is useless if no action is taken against racists in Umno's midst, recalling the statements of Penang Umno special officer to the PM Nasir Safar, Perkasa chief Ibrahim Ali, pro-Umno academic Ridhuan Tee Abdullah and "many more" who have gotten off scot free.

10.20am: Sinar Harian reports that incumbent Terengganu Menteri Besar Ahmad Said has sworn a religious oath to deny that he is involved in the logging scandal as alleged by PKR.

This is the third time Ahmad has taken such an oath, although the issues have varied.

The first was when he denied any involvement in the issue of supplying school uniforms to needy children.

The second time, he was alleged to have contacted DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng over a multi-storey parking issue during the state legislative assembly sitting.

"I have been accused by the opposition of being involved in the logging scandal. For this reason, in front of all of you I make this religious oath," he reportedly said when swearing the oath yesterday.

"I deny being involved in corruption over the awarding of logging concessions."

9.30am - Bintulu: Issues have arisen over posters of BN's Bintulu candidate Tiong King Sing that have been found in the compound of the Tua Pek Kong temple.

According to Sin Chew Daily, a reader is not happy that a political candidate's posters have been placed in a place of worship.

The temple committee itself has said that it is apolitical and neutral, and that both BN and DAP may lease space to put up political paraphernalia.

9.00am - Sibul: Incumbent Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud has announced that the allowance for over 5,000 community leaders have increased by as much as 76 percent.

The Borneo Post reports this today, also saying that a Temenggong, the highest-ranked community leader, will get RM1,500 - or 76 percent than the RM850 received previously.

The allowance of a pemanca has been increased from RM700 to RM1,200, while a penghulu will get RM1,000 from RM600 previously. The 'ketua kaum', who include kapitans, village heads and longhouse chiefs, will enjoy an increment ranging from RM450 to RM800.

"Since we already have a minimum wage, the respective increments for community leaders are to rationalise what has already been put in place," explains James Jemut Masing, the state minister of land development.

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