

Big crowd boosts hope for Pakatan takeover in NS

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Negeri Sembilan DAP chief Anthony Loke says the sheer size of the crowd at the “monster” DAP ceramah in Seremban last Monday is proof not only of Pakatan Rakyat being able to retain Seremban and Rasah, but that it can win over the state on May 5.

A crowd of more than 10,000 people braved the light rain that fell during the ceramah held in front of the Seremban market that night.

Those gathered had filled up the ceramah site and the crowd spilled out onto the five-foot walkways.

“This is a sign of change that is to come in Negri Sembilan. Tonight is a historic night because this is the first time in the last 20 to 30 years that we have had such a monster ceramah in front of the Seremban market,” Loke (right), who is also the Seremban candidate, said at the ceramah.

While this could signify that Seremban and Rasah parliamentary constituencies are largely Pakatan Rakyat strongholds, the coalition cannot slacken in its campaign, for the BN appears to be catching up.

Observations by Malaysiakini on the third day of the campaign indicated that the Negri Sembilan BN had shifted into higher gear, with an abundance of coalition and campaign banners along the roads from the highway toll plaza to the Seremban city centre.

Before this, Pakatan banners and posters were mostly the only campaign materials seen at the main corners of Seremban town.

This is perhaps an indication of hostility towards BN’s pick of Negri Sembilan MCA chairperson Dr Yeow Chai Tiam as candidate for Seremban thawing, as well as more concerted efforts to challenge Pakatan’s hold there.

The parliamentary constituencies of Seremban and Rasah are important as although Negri Sembilan is ruled by BN, the seats are located within state capital and between them encompass 11 state assembly seats.

Of these, only two state seats - Lenggeng and Labu - were won by BN representatives in 2008.

However, BN's hold over Lenggeng appears shaky following dissatisfaction among local Umno members over the party's selection of Ishak Ismail, who held the seat from 2004 to 2008, as candidate, and prompting former member Zulkifli Abdullah to run as an independent.

Even so, Pakatan would do well to remember that it won the Malay majority state seats of Ampangan and Sikamat by a hair's breadth, with a mere 165 and 499 votes respectively.

The opposition must also take into account the closure of several PKR operations centres in Ampangan resulting from opposition to the selection of state PKR chief Kamarul Baharin Abbas as candidate.

In Sikamat, the incumbent Aminuddin Harun is facing a younger challenger, in the form of Puteri Umno's Wan Salwati Abdullah.

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