

Muhyiddin and Anwar exchange fire in Johor

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JOHOR Yesterday, both BN deputy chief Muhyiddin Yassin and PKR de facto leader Anwar coincidentally brought their campaign to Johor, one of the frontline states that will determine which coalition will form the new federal government on May 5.

Arriving in Johor almost at the same time around 4pm, both allocated their precious time to focus on crucial constituencies.

During his two-day visit until today, Muhyiddin attended three functions in the parliamentary constituencies of Gelang Patah and Pulai in southern Johor yesterday, and is expected to attend another five events scattered in northern Johor today - in Pagoh, Ledang, Bakri and Segamat.

Gelang Patah and Pulai are being fought for by Pakatan Rakyat heavyweights - DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang and PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub, whereas Pagoh is Muhyiddin's own constituency.

Bakri is defended by incumbent DAP MP Er Teck Hwa, while Segamat is contested by Johor PKR chief Chua Jui Meng. Ledang is another seat where Pakatan is hopeful of making a breakthrough.

Anwar only made a half-day tour that covered Tebrau, Johor Bahru, Batu Pahat and Segamat, a clear indication of PKR's focus.

Most of Muhyiddin's activities were indoor and attended by party supporters clad in BN T-shirts, while Anwar's outdoor evening ceramahs managed to pull some 1,000 Malay-majority crowd in Parit Botak, Batu Pahat and an astounding crowd of 20,000 in Segamat town.

Muhyiddin, who was the Johor menteri besar before being succeeded by Abdul Ghani Othman, dedicated much of his speech to Kit Siang during a dinner with around 1,000 animated BN supporters last night at the Johor Bahru Tengah Municipal Council hall.

"His name is Lim Kit Siang and another name, who? Salahuddin Ayub. He is contesting Pulai and said he wants to take Nusa Jaya (state seat), similar to the ambition of Anwar to take Putrajaya," he said.

The floor jeered each time the names of opposition leaders rolled off Muhyiddin's tongue.

"I don't want to say again, later Lim Kit Siang will say I am racist again."

Muhyiddin also repeated the remark that Kit Siang has been "trapped" in Gelang Patah after BN fielded Ghani in the BN stronghold.

"I don't think Ghani is afraid. I don't think you all are afraid... Kit Siang will be buried here.

"I want to explain why we should reject Kit Siang. This is not an issue of personality, but an issue of the opposition. We must make sure this is still a blue state.

"Who is the one that usually makes statements to fan racial sentiments? He said one thing in Malay areas and said he wants to safeguard the Chinese in Chinese areas. Who is racist?" he added.

Anwar mentions string of BN scandals

On the other hand, during his rounds of ceramahs, Anwar named former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's second son Mokhzani, who allegedly received billions of ringgit of projects from Petronas, and a 24-year-old daughter of Umno minister Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin, who he claimed has obtained a RM30 million project.

He also recalled the National Feedlot Corporation scandal and the questionable land deal between Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera and Selangor Wanita Umno chief Raja Ropiaah Raja Abdullah, to highlight the issue of corruption and cronyism in the BN administration.

Perkasa chief Ibrahim Ali, to whom Umno gave way to defend his Pasir Mas seat against a PAS candidate, and Perkasa vice-chief Zulkifli Noordin (centre in photo) who is contesting Shah Alam under the BN ticket were frequent topics in Anwar's speeches.

He poked fun at the BN candidate for the Guchil state seat in Kelantan, Nik Sapeia Nik Yusoff, who attacked former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad with a pepper spray in Kelantan in 2006.

"I never thought Umno would field a candidate who attacked Mahathir. I guess

Mahathir does not know about it yet. Let me tell him tomorrow, then he will scold Najib (Abdul Razak)."

Anwar also capitalised on the rocket logo crisis faced by DAP just two days before the nomination, portraying it as a conspiracy by BN to confuse Pakatan supporters, but who were later forced to abort the plan after PKR and PAS agreed to lend their logos to DAP.

"That was not the wisdom of the leadership of DAP, PAS or PKR. We made that decision because we know the people have awakened. Hence I salute the people."

The development of Iskandar Malaysia was another issue that saw Anwar and Muhyiddin exchanging fire.

Anwar (centre in photo) pledged that Pakatan would not cancel the mega project should it come to power, but would make sure the project is not a profit scheme for BN cronies.

"I'm not against development projects, but if the project does not provide even one opportunity to the Malays, Chinese and Indians here, what is the use of such a project?"

In contrast, Muhyiddin claimed that Iskandar Malaysia has become the most developed region in Malaysia under the governance of BN and Ghani.

However, he admitted that some people are not happy with the project because they failed to understand its vision and require more explanation.

To counter the opposition's attack that the properties boom brought by Iskandar Malaysia has aggravated the housing problem in the Johor Bahru area, Muhyiddin was quick to launch an affordable housing project yesterday.

Built by the state investment arm Johor Corporation, the project comprises 304 houses priced from RM35,000 to RM80,000 for the people in Pulau.

"When they promise you the moon, stars and houses, don't believe them. Only the BN government can provide affordable houses for you all," Muhyiddin added.

