

## **PAS looks for Malay support in Shah Alam**

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**By Ram Anand**

GE13 WATCH SELANGOR PAS' Khalid Samad, who is defending the Shah Alam parliamentary seat, walked languidly into a pharmacy in the heart of Klang's Chinese business community, introducing himself to everyone as the candidate.

The shopowner walked cautiously to the counter, keeping a safe distance. With much apprehension, he asked Khalid if he was the man whose photo could be seen on a poster outside.

The poster reads 'Pilih (choose) Zul Noordin', Khalid's rival from BN for the seat. Parts of Klang fall within the Shah Alam constituency.

Khalid, who was wearing a skullcap similar to Zulkifli's in the photo, quickly pointed out the difference, after letting out a short laugh.

"That is dacing (the BN logo), I am from bulan (moon, the PAS logo)," he said.

The man bravely took a couple of steps further toward Khalid, his apprehension now gone, and extended his hand to shake Khalid's.

"Oh, you are bulan (moon). I will definitely vote for you," the man said, much to Khalid's delight.

For all the talk about the Chinese community being apprehensive of the Islamic party, no such sentiments were visible on Khalid's walkabout last Thursday.

"Kali inilah," said some middle-aged Chinese men having breakfast in a coffee shop, when he introduced himself.

With a smile, Khalid corrected them: "Ini kalilah!", echoing the now-famous Sabahan cry for change that has been widely adopted by Pakatan Rakyat.

Khalid then took a seat, chatting up his campaign workers, over a glass of hot Chinese tea.

Later, he stopped in his tracks when he passed a lottery shop, but it did not deter him from introducing himself to an elderly Chinese man behind the counter, seeking his vote as well.

"In Shah Alam, in my five years here, the reception from the non-Malay community has been really good. People no longer see us as being extremist," Khalid later said in the comfort of his office.

The Chinese community is ready to accept PAS, he said, noting that the real barrier for him and his team is to break through the Malay mindset.

"For them, the apprehension about DAP eroding Malay rights is still there. Addressing their fear is something I try to do here. I tell them that Pakatan will also protect the Malays."

'Insult to Shah Alam Malays'

Much of the attention, however, has shifted to the controversial personality of Zulkifli, whose views are often branded as 'extremist' and 'racist'.

"The Malays here are moderate and progressive. I know many who consider Zulkifli's (right) statement (in which he insulted Hindus) to be an insult to Shah Alam Malays, more so the decision to field Zulkifli here," he said.

Although there is very little to suggest that Khalid will fail to defend his seat, he is not ready to be complacent.

"I shouldn't be too relaxed. I should give my full effort, because we never know the effectiveness of the Umno propaganda. In that context, there's still a lot of ground to cover," he said.

"Of course, I would like to debate on policies. But the anger (towards Zulkifli) is positive, the impact should be nationwide, not only in Shah Alam. And talking about policies, I think Zulkifli is not a representative of Umno or BN either. He's an outsider here."

Khalid further said he does not understand the "logic" behind BN chairperson Najib Abdul Razak's decision to field Zulkifli in Shah Alam.

"They are refusing to learn from their previous mistake," he said in reference to the 2008 contest, when dissatisfaction with Umno's decision to field Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin translated into protest votes in Khalid's favour.

"My majority (of 9,314 votes) was not reflected in the state seats that we won under Shah Alam. It is the rejection factor that got me almost 4,000 extra votes.

"It was because Aziz was not from Shah Alam and was not doing work here. Now, again they have brought in someone from outside, ignoring the local Umno leaders."

Given the urban nature of this seat, Khalid has resorted to walkabouts to increase his visibility, and has only conducted small-scale ceramahs.

When campaigning, he does not engage in personal attacks and elaborates his points calmly - the antithesis of the firebrand that he was known to be during his first term in Parliament.

He also has fewer posters and banners than Zulkifli but, as if to underline the non-Malay support, a man in a Chinese medicine shop urged him to "drown out Zulkifli's face".

"Will do, will do," Khalid said obligingly, before seeking a herbal remedy for his hoarse throat.

He was given three packets of herbs. When he took out his wallet to pay, the shopowner insisted that it was free of charge.

That should see him through the remaining days of campaigning, as he pushes on with persuading Malay voters - who make up 69 percent of the electorate in Shah Alam - that their interests are safe in Pakatan hands.

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