

Nurul worries over 16k new voters, high-handed tactics

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PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar is facing an uphill battle to retain her Lembah Pantai parliamentary seat against caretaker Federal Territories and Well-being Minister Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin, with independent candidate Rusli Baba making it a three-way contest.

A major problem for Nurul Izzah, 32, a mother of two, is the 16,500 new voters in her constituency, of whom she is convinced that 5,000 are phantom voters, for she is not able to access them..

Her concern is genuine, for she defeated Umno Wanita chief Shahrizat Abdul Jalil with a margin of just 2,895 votes.

Hence, the number of new voters and the fear of phantom voters can certainly overturn an expected victory - the 2,000 postal voters in Lembah Pantai not included.

Despite being the incumbent, Nurul Izzah is an underdog against the vast, well-oiled machinery of Raja Nong Chik, who has a reputation of being good at servicing the people in his youth days.

Raja Nong Chik, 60, was a Lembah Pantai Umno Youth leader in the 1980s and there are pictures of him in his younger days, helping people in floods and major disasters, such as fires in squatter areas. Hence, he is seen as a person with strong grassroots support.

He holds a degree in economics and is a certified accountant. Raja Nong Chik had, long before the start of the election campaign, put up banners and placards detailing his achievements in Lembah Pantai and last Monday launched a report card on his achievements.

'I hope my track record will pull me through'

He hopes to bring three mass rapid transit (MRT) stations to Lembah Pantai to improve public transport, and also improve the existing facilities in the Kuala Lumpur City Hall flats and the low-cost flats in the constituency.

"I hope my track record will pull me through in wresting the seat from the

PKR. Let the people choose: do they want a representative who works for them or someone who only makes a lot of noise?" he had said.

In his report card, Raja Nong Chik admits that he had been offered a safer seat to contest but declined for the fact that he was brought up in Lembah Pantai, got married there and his children were also born here.

Uphill battle for Nurul?

Despite intense campaigning, Nurul Izzah, a graduate of the famous John Hopkins University in the United States, complains that she was hindered from going into several areas, including the Sri Pahang flats, which have been designated as "BN territory".

Similarly in the Pantai Permai area, where BN election campaign booths have been erected within a few metres of one another.

Despite this Nurul Izzah has managed to campaign there, unlike the political violence that took place last year when her father Anwar Ibrahim spoke at a ceramah there.

NONEThough being in the opposition, Nurul Izzah said, she would continue to fight to stem corruption in the present government and uplift human rights.

She is well accepted by the middle and upper class communities of the Bangsar area and has also managed to win over a significant number of voters in the low-cost flats areas.

Her aide Fahmi Fadzil said Nurul Izzah does have a huge following in the Pantai Permai area, but the people largely do not come to her during her visits as they are living in the City Hall flats.

"They fear repercussions if they show their support openly, that they may even be told to move out. However, the support has been good," said Fahmi.

He noted that some of Nurul Izzah's supporters had also been threatened by the BN supporters, even warned that their vehicles could be destroyed.

Nurul Izzah admitted that getting access to some of the areas in the constituency has been a problem for her, but it would not deter her zeal to work for her victory.

At a press conference yesterday, Anwar, the PKR de facto leader, noted that his

eldest daughter had to work twice as hard to keep her seat, for she was going against the City Hall machinery as well.

Fahmi said the concern over phantom voters was as genuine as in the other places in the Federal Territory and in Selangor. Phantom votes would overturn the tide, which was why his party workers had to remain vigilant.

Rusli: How can Raja Nong Chik evaluate himself?

The independent candidate Rusli, an Umno member who was sacked by the party after he filed his nomination paper, told Malaysiakini his campaign was gaining steam as the days passed.

NONE "I hope I can make an impact as I have slowly put up my posters in Pantai Dalam and Bukit Angkasa. I recognise that I am the underdog but my chances appear good."

Rusli (left) also blasted Raja Nong Chik's report card, saying the minister had not made a fair assessment of himself.

"How can he come up with his own report card? For students, their teachers evaluate them. In this case, it should be the voters or residents assessing his performance," Rusli said.

Born and having grown up in Lembah Pantai, Rusli said he wanted to represent the real voice of the residents.

The Kerinchi flats were torn down to for rebuilding, but were not rebuilt as promised. "There is nothing there up to now and the people are upset," he said.

Lembah Pantai is seen as one of the hottest battles in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. Clearly, Raja Nong Chik has the advantage by way of billboards and posters all over the constituency, which includes Kampung Sentosa off Old Klang Road, Travers, Brickfields, Pantai Dalam, Kampung Bahagia, Kampung Bohol and parts of Petaling and Petaling Selatan.

The minister's images also appear in the electronic advertisements licensed by the KL City Hall to a private company.

However, as Universiti Malaya Centre for Democracy and Election (Umcedel) has noted, 66 percent of the 1,407 respondents it interviewed said such campaign materials have no effect on them.

So, who is going to win on May 5?

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