

## **Ripples to hit Johor, tsunami remains to be seen**

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ANALYSIS JOHOR With only a day left to the general election, Pakatan Rakyat's 'invasion' on BN's southern stronghold of Johor is set to send ripples across the state.

dap johor gelang patah sutera mall ceramah 60k people 020513 anwar kit siang  
Aside from retaining Bakri, the opposition coalition's chances of capturing four more parliamentary seats, namely Gelang Patah, Kulai, Kluang and Segamat appear positive.

But whether the ripples will turn into a tsunami that could potentially claim BN's present parliamentary seats like Johor Bahru, Pasir Gudang, Pulai, Tebrau in the South and Labis and Muar in the North will depend on a number of factors.

Pakatan leading seats

Gelang Patah (BN Abdul Ghani Othman vs DAP Lim Kit Siang)

Kulai (BN Tay Chin Hein vs DAP Teo Nie Ching vs Independent K Surendiran)

Kluang (BN incumbent Hou Kok Chung vs DAP Liew Chin Tong)

Segamat (BN incumbent S Subramaniam vs PKR Chua Jui Meng)

Bakri (DAP incumbent Er Teck Hwa vs BN Lee Ching Yong)

Aside from DAP-held Bakri, the other four seats are considered the lowest-hanging fruit for Pakatan to wrest from BN due to strong anti-establishment sentiments among the Chinese community.

All of them are contested by Pakatan heavyweights and have seen unprecedented turnouts at the rallies in their constituencies.

All of these seats have a large Chinese population, with the exception of Segamat where its Chinese and Malay populations are almost equal on top of the 10 percent of Indians.

However, Pakatan in Segamat has been able to build its momentum in these final

hours while the BN incumbent is under siege by the National Union of Bank Employees (Nube), which has been picketing in the constituency.

#### Possible surprises

Johor Bahru (BN incumbent Shahrir Samad vs PKR Md Hashim Hussein)

Pasir Gudang (BN Normala Abdul Samad vs PKR Ahmad Faidhi Saidi)

Pulai (BN incumbent Nur Jazlan Mohamed vs PAS Salahuddin Ayub)

Tebrau (BN Khoo Soo Seang vs PKR Steven Choong)

Muar (BN incumbent Razali Ibrahim vs PKR Nor Hizwan Ahmad)

Labis (BN incumbent Chua Tee Yong vs DAP S Ramakrishnan)

Together with Gelang Patah, the first four seats are second-layer parliamentary constituencies that form the greater Johor Bahru city, which is highly homogeneous in terms of voter sentiment.

NONE All four of these southern seats are Malay-majority constituencies but popular BN incumbents may be threatened by growing anti-establishment sentiments by the substantial Malaysian Chinese population there.

As for Malay-majority Muar, it shares similar characteristics with the said southern constituencies as it represents the largest urban centre in north Johor on top of over a decade of strong groundwork laid down by PAS.

Labis is the only Chinese-majority seat to make it into this category as it is largely semi-urban and MCA still has influence in outlying towns on top of the largest Indian population in Johor, which will decide the outcome of this seat.

Whether Pakatan's ripple in Johor will turn into a tsunami to pull off the 'possible surprises' depends on three key factors, namely a possible Malay undercurrent, new voters and higher than expected Chinese support.

#### Malay undercurrent?

Throughout the campaign period especially in urban and semi-urban centres saw the notable presence of Malay Malaysian voters, mostly closed mouthed, at Pakatan's rallies.

pakatan mega rally skudai johor 300413 audience 08 Many of them tend to be at the back of the crowd during mega ceramah or standing at the fringes at small groups ceramah (ceramah kelompok).

Their cryptic response has been difficult to read but if they buy the opposition coalition's message, the result could possibly be a silent Malay revolt.

Coupled with the strong anti-establishment sentiment among the Chinese community, a small swing of between five to 10 percent among these Malay voters would be enough to cause several parliamentary constituencies previously not under the "marginal seat" radar to fall.

If significant, the swing could also potentially claim other parliamentary seats such as Ledang, Ayer Hitam, Batu Pahat and Tanjung Piai.

Whether such undercurrent exists will be determined at the ballot box tomorrow (May 5).

#### New and young voters

Dubbed the "mother of all elections", never before have voters felt they could wield this much power over the government at the ballot box.

pakatan mega rally skudai johor 300413 audience 03 This is reflected in the spike of new voters registered, at 2.6 million for the 13th general election, is more than four-fold compared with the last general election which only saw about 638,000 new voters.

For example, the increase of new voters in Pasir Gudang and Tebrau is over 35 percent and over 25 percent in Pulai, thereby adding to the uncertainties in these constituencies as previous trends are rendered obsolete.

Furthermore, outstation voters, most of them youths are also expected to return to vote in record numbers this time around.

#### Higher than expected Chinese support

The overwhelming Chinese support notwithstanding, Pakatan is having a hard time reaching out to Malay voters, particularly those outside urban centres.

NONEShould Malay voters swing back to BN in line with the trends from several

by-elections in 2011, Pakatan's hopes will be on their most reliable vote bank - Chinese voters.

The response shown by Chinese Johoreans in this week's mammoth Pakatan rallies was unprecedented, even surpassing the ones seen in Penang during the 2008 general election which wiped out Gerakan from the state.

DAP has since revised its initial target of garnering 75 percent of Chinese votes to over 80 percent, and its final-hour focus has been on Chinese areas in marginal constituencies such as Labis and Segamat.

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