

Pakatan's grip on three hot seats in the balance

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GE WATCH SELANGOR The three parliamentary seats of Kuala Selangor, Kuala Langat, and Hulu Langat held by Pakatan Rakyat in Selangor are hanging in precarious balance.

Won with slim majorities in the previous election, even a hypothetical 2.5 percent vote swing in favour of BN would see it return to the latter.

The three seats all hot seats to watch when ballot papers are finally tallied on the night of May 5, under the watchful eye of the candidates' counting agents.

NONE of the three, Pakatan Rakyat's odds are perhaps worst in Hulu Langat, where several factors weigh against incumbent Che Rosli Che Mat (left) from PAS, who is fending off a challenge from lawyer and newcomer Adzhaliza Mohd Nor of Umno.

Che Rosli, a nuclear scientist, had won the seat in 2008 with a majority of 1,745 votes. The seat has a Malay majority of 53 percent, but also has a significant Chinese Malaysian minority of 34 percent while Indians make up 11 percent of the electorate.

In the state constituency of Kajang, which is within Hulu Langat, supporters of PKR incumbent Lee Kim Sin have voiced dissatisfaction at him not being fielded as a candidate.

Meanwhile in another Hulu Langat state seat, Semenyih, PKR is locked in a three-cornered fight against BN and popular grassroots leader S Arutchelvan of PSM, with the latter holding sway with non-Malay voters.

It appears then, Che Rosli's recipe to avert defeat is to avoid becoming collateral damage that is partly his party ally PKR's doing, while at the same time making inroads into the Umno stronghold of Dusun Tua.

Chance to perform

Downstream from Kajang at the coast, Kuala Langat incumbent Abdullah Sani Abdul Hamid of PKR defends his seat against the greenhorn Shahrudin Omar of Umno, and Independent Kottappan Suppaiah.

NONE Abdullah Sani had previously won the seat with a majority of just 989 votes, but now enjoys the advantage of incumbency in a state where Pakatan is in power and had a chance to perform.

Kuala Langat has a similar racial composition as Hulu Langat, but with a slightly larger Indian community.

Another Pakatan incumbent who had won with a slim majority is PAS moderate Dzulkefly Ahmad (right), who won Kuala Selangor with 862 votes. He is in a straight fight against Umno newcomer Irmohizam Ibrahim.

"Dr Dzul", as the former is often known, faces a slight possibility of backlash from Ijok voters after the incumbent assemblyperson and caretaker menteri besar Khalid Ibrahim moved to contest in Port Klang leaving rookie Idris Ahmad in his place.

However, Dzulkefly does enjoy some degree of popularity as a PAS central committee member and one of the Pakatan manifesto's architects.

Although BN controls only six of the 22 parliamentary seats in the state, these three Pakatan-held seats are easy pickings compared to BN's marginal seats, if one were to look at past election results in isolation.

NONEThe Selangor BN parliamentary seat won with the slimmest majority is Sabak Bernam - 1,335 votes.

Here, two political rookies will face-off on Sunday, with Abdul Aziz Bari for PKR and Mohd Fasih Mohd Fakeh for Umno.

Abdul Aziz's writings as a prominent constitutional lawyer on issues such as the monarchy and Islam may strike a chord with the Malay voters there, who form 81 percent of the electorate.

However, this is marred by some dissatisfaction among the party ranks, since he was fielded as a candidate although he only joined the party recently.

'Mike Tyson' factor in Hulu Selangor

In Hulu Selangor, MIC's P Kamalanathan is defending his win in the 2010 by-election from strong PKR challenger Khalid Jaafar, one of party de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim's trusted men.

The former had won with a majority of just 1,725 votes.

NONEFormer Selangor menteri besar Muhammad Taib (left), a local who is still popular amongst senior Malay voters, has been campaigning for Khalid Jaafar in the constituency and may sway just enough voters to tip the scales.

Malay voters make up 56 percent of the voters there, followed by the Chinese making up 23 percent of the electorate, and Indian voters 18 percent.

Next up the ladder is Pandan, where the prospect of a 'clash of the Titans' between PKR strategy director Rafizi Ramli and former transport minister and incumbent MP Ong Tee Keat have long fizzled out when the latter opted not to submit his nomination as an Independent.

What remained is a three-cornered fight between Rafizi, MCA newcomer Garry Lim, and Ong's long-serving former aide Allan Tan, the latter of whom is bound to split Lim's votes.

Ong had won the previous election with a 2,961-vote majority, and remains popular for his work in exposing corruption and providing welfare and community services in the Chinese-majority seat (48 percent).

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