

## **'Your old friend' Ghani's last bid to woo Chinese voters**

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**By Kuek Ser Kuang Keng**

JOHOR Facing his aggressive rival Lim Kit Siang from DAP who has been fanning the emotion of Chinese voters with the claim that a change in federal power is highly possible, BN's Gelang Patah candidate Abdul Ghani Othman chooses to ply the "friend" card instead.

In his final round of publicity campaign to target Chinese voters, the incumbent Johor menteri besar is calling himself "an old friend" of the Chinese community, and one who has been adopting moderate policies and fair treatment to all ethnic communities.

NONEHe has been using the term "lao peng you", which means 'old friend' in Mandarin, to Chinese folks at many campaign events.

Besides Chinese-language leaflets that read "I'm your old friend, I understand your needs" and "I'm your old friend, I take care of your family", he bought full-page colour advertisements (left) in Chinese dailies today entitled "My worry for Johor – an open letter to the Chinese from your old friend Abdul Ghani".

In the letter, Ghani stressed that his administration has been operating on the principle of zhong yong (moderation).

"This is why Chinese culture and education has been given much attention in Johor. Just as I have paid attention to the needs of other communities, I have also seen to the needs of the Chinese.

"This is how we have been able to sustain prosperity and harmony among the different communities over the past 18 years. In so many ways, moderation has been our most powerful asset in Johor."

Lost of 'Johor way'

He said this "Johor way" is being destroyed by certain political leaders who utilise "cunning political manipulation" and hostile words to stir the emotions of Chinese voters against the government.

Ghani claimed that he dislikes finger-pointing and has rejected his campaign team's proposal to launch aggressive attacks against his opponent, despite the fierce

competition in this general election.

Without directly naming Lim, he said his competitor is reaching out to the Chinese using "anti-moderation" tactics, which goes against all that is good and honourable in Chinese philosophy and culture.

"My dear friends, I believe you will stand with me to safeguard our 'Johor Way'," he concluded.

The English version of the letter can be read [here](#).

Like his political messages, Ghani's daily campaign schedule has been covering voters of all three major races, with visits to Chinese temples and associations a must almost everyday.

With less than 24 hours to go before polling day, Ghani this morning visited the Malaysian Buddhist Association Johor Branch, which also serves as a temple, in Taman Impian Emas, Skudai, together with BN's Skudai candidate Liang Ah Chy and MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek.

Taking the stage after the association chairperson Reverend Shi Chan Liang, who spoke in Mandarin, Ghani told the Chinese audience that he could capture the words he ping (peace) and fan rong (prosperity) in Shi's speech.

The soft-spoken Johor BN and Umno chief then repeated part of the content of his open letter in his speech.

The presence of Ghani's family members in his campaign also served to enhanced his image as a moderate leader tuned to the needs of a multi-racial community.

His wife Jamilah Ariffin has been singing two Chinese classics – Tian Mi Mi (sweet sweet) and Ai De Li Wu (a gift of love) during many events with Chinese voters.

This morning, his son and daughter, together with their respective non-Malay spouses, as well as his grandson, were also at the temple as part of his campaign team (below).

It is believed that Ghani's soft approach may prove effective among older Chinese voters and those in rural areas, but that the young and urban Chinese constituents are expected to back Pakatan Rakyat.

Nonetheless, Ghani only needs slightly over 25 percent of Chinese votes in Gelang

Patah parliamentary constituency coupled with 80 percent of Malay and Indian votes to defeat the DAP veteran.

Lim out to shake off anti-Malay claims

NONE However, although Ghani is adopting a moderate approach, the state BN seems out to frighten the Chinese electorates.

It has published full-page colour advertisements (left) in Chinese dailies today which warned that all mega projects in the state would be halted if there is a change of government, as experienced leaders would be replaced.

Other BN candidates in the state have also resorted to last-minute newspaper advertisements to highlight their local services and track record.

On the other hand, Lim is still struggling to fend off the anti-Malay allegation against him by issuing a statement in Malay.

"DAP defends the special status of the Malays, don't be duped by the slander by Umno-BN.

NONE "I appeal to all Malaysian voters, especially the Malays, to reject the slander and lies against myself and DAP," he said in the statement issued today.

DAP has been distributing Malay leaflets (right) in the constituency to refute the allegation that the party adviser was behind the May 13 racial riots in 1969.

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