

PKR Youth chief tells how he became a 'giant killer'

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Former Malacca chief minister Mohd Ali Rustam's electoral defeat in Bukit Katil, Malacca, after helming the state government for three terms was probably one of the biggest upsets of the May 5 general election.

The victor, PKR Youth chief Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin, had a dismal record in his past electoral efforts - losing the contest for Tangga Batu in 2004 and Dungun in 2008, which made him be seen as an underdog in Malacca.

NONE" When campaigning, I joked that in 1971 there was a boxing match - the fight of the century between (heavyweight boxing champions) Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. At that time, Frazier won (an upset victory).

"In 2013, it is Mohd Ali (left) again. But this time against Shamsul Iskandar," Shamsul said yesterday evening, at a forum organised by the Universiti Malaya Centre of Democracy and Elections in Universiti Malaya, drawing laughter from the 200-odd audience.

Bukit Katil is a mixed constituency where 53 percent of the electorate are Malay, 41 percent Chinese and six percent Indian.

Shamsul won with 46,167 votes, beating Mohd Ali by a majority of 5,447 votes.

'Unusual anger'

Shamsul also went on to thank Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar, who was among the audience, for making the people realise that even Umno ministers are not invulnerable.

NONE Nurul Izzah (right) has made a name for herself as a 'giant slayer' after defeating two incumbent ministers in successive elections.

In a humble fashion, Shamsul said his victory was due to people seeking change, and not because he was contesting there.

While conceding that campaigning in a rural area was difficult for Pakatan Rakyat, he said there has been an "unusual anger" towards Umno in the villages, though they still respected the party.

In one encounter with villagers, the kampung head ranted about Ali helping cronies to benefit and leaving nothing for the general public.

Perhaps not having noticed the party logo that Shamsul was wearing, the village head ended his rant by asking, "So which part of Umno are you from?"

Shamsul said he identified himself as the PKR candidate and asked for his support.

He said he did not have any difficulty spreading information in urban areas, as the voters there already have diverse sources of information.

Countering BR1M

In rural areas, Shamsul said, he relied on sending a consistent message for change in his campaign, along with calls to the people not to believe mainstream media reports.

NONEFor example, he countered the BN's BR1M handouts by explaining how Pakatan Rakyat's policies, such as lower goods and oil prices, would be better in the long run than receiving handouts.

Now that he has become an opposition MP, Shamsul said, he hopes the BN would ensure that he would receive the financial allocation from the federal government.

"In my constituency, there are more than 99,000 voters. The BR1M allocation will come to RM1 million a year and I am sure the BN will not give it to me but to someone else to distribute. I am sure if we fight this in court we will lose.

"If we want to move forward, election victories should be acknowledged as a victory for the people," Shamsul said.

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