

'Voters made to swear to back BN'

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By Koh Jun Lin

INTERVIEW Allegations of electoral misconduct have taken on a religious twist in Kuala Selangor, according the parliamentary constituency's PAS candidate Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, who was defeated in his bid to retain the seat.

azlanDzulkefly said his supporters had been bought over for up to RM1,000 each in cash, and then made to swear a religious oath that they will vote for or, in some instances, already have voted for the BN in the May 5 general election.

This took place mostly in Jeram in the last 24 hours of the election campaigning and election day, he said.

"Malays are fearful of vows. Very afraid. If you swear by God but you don't do it, you will die," he said in an interview with Malaysiakini last Thursday.

Dzulkefly lost the Kuala Selangor seat to BN's Irmohizam Ibrahim by 460 votes. Malays make up 64 percent of the voters in the constituency.

In Jeram, which is a state seat under Kuala Selangor, BN's incumbent assemblyperson Amiruddin Setro increased his majority from 1,476 votes in the 12th general election of 2008 to 2,834 votes.

Dzulkefly said he sensed that something was amiss when the villagers, even the youth, refused to see him.

NONE"I had a lot of programmes with them (the constituents), and all these village chiefs would say, 'Don't worry, these youths are your supporters.

"On the last day of the election campaign, they didn't want to see my face. They were in hiding already and were ashamed to see us.

"That was when I knew that something disastrous is going to befall us, and true enough (it did)," Dzulkefly said.

10 Jeram voters confess to Dzulkefly

Since then, he added, about 10 of those who received the cash bribes felt guilty and came forward to tell him what had taken place.

Although he wanted to include this key argument in his election petition, it was not done because the people who confessed to him asked for protection from physical harm, which PAS could not provide.

Dzulkefly said his lawyers also felt that an election petition would not succeed on grounds of corrupt practice, so it focused on taking the Election Commission (EC) to task instead on alleged discrepancies in the "Borang 14".

Borang 14 is the record of the final, official counts of votes in each polling stream of a constituency.

NONEDzulkefly, a PAS moderate and a director of its research centre, also said he suffered character assassination while campaigning, right from the start of the election campaign period.

"All my strengths have become my weaknesses. I am someone in PAS who is seen as a progressive, a moderate. All those were turned against me.

"My visits to churches, Chinese and Hindu temples were twisted and shown, particularly to Malay rural voters, who do not have much access to other media," he lamented.

The character assassination campaign focused on his view on the use of 'Allah' as the Malay translation for the Christian God, religious pluralism and the idea of forming an Islamic state to warn voters on what Dzulkefly might propose if put in Parliament.

"This is why, when I looked at the score sheet, two things were apparent: One, I certainly did not get the Malay vote. Secondly, I even lost the young Malay voters because they were massively bought over," he said.

Malaysiakini has attempted to contact newly-elected Kuala Selangor MP Irmohizam Ibrahim, and is awaiting his response for comments.

Tomorrow: How Umno regained the Malay vote

This interview was jointly conducted by Hafiz Yatim, Kow Gah Chie and Koh Jun Lin

