

How Umno exploits fears of Pakatan among Malays

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INTERVIEW Umno has successfully exploited the fears many Malays that a stronger Pakatan Rakyat would mean a dominant DAP, said PAS central committee member Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad.

According to Dzulkefly, this strategy was used by Umno with much success among the rural and even some urban Malays, which surprisingly included Malay professionals, former bureaucrats and technocrats.

NONEThese key groups of voters had voted against PAS and Pakatan in last month's general election.

The former Kuala Selangor MP reported that it was not no longer a problem for the non-Malays, especially the Chinese, to support Islamic-based PAS.

Given this, it is crucial for PAS and Pakatan to assuage the fears of the Malays, including the professionals, before the 14th general election which is due in five years.

Backing his analysis with empirical evidence, Dzulkefly said though incumbent Dr Halimah Ali successfully defended her Selat Kelang state constituency in Selangor with a higher majority, she nevertheless lost the Malay - and especially young Malay votes - in four polling stations.

Her bigger win was attributed to a large number of votes from non-Malays.

Shrewd ploy in fielding Zul Nordin

Similarly, in Shah Alam, many were expecting BN-backed Perkasa vice-president Zulkifli Noordin to lose his deposit, but yet he garnered 38,000 votes in an urban area that comprises educated voters, as well as a large number of professionals.

"Some of my neighbours who are professionals and former bureaucrats told me they would vote PAS if the party was outside Pakatan for they feared a stronger influence by DAP. They hate Umno, but their fear of Pakatan is because of the DAP.

NONE"It is what we call a fear of success, or what is medically termed as 'atychiphobia' where, for example, some women taking civil engineering as a

profession may fear their success would result in them losing their femininity.

"Similarly, in the case of PAS, this fear among the Malays of a potential Pakatan success is that it could bring the downfall of Islam or the Malays. This is something that we have to address," he added.

Dzulkefly also said some women professionals had recently also expressed similar fears and he told them that this may not happen if more PAS MPs were elected.

All in all, he said, Umno won 88 seats compared with 51 garnered by the Malay MPs in PKR and PAS combined.

"In 2008, Umno won 77 seats and it managed to increase it successfully through this strategy."

Umno, he added, was quite shrewd in backing Perkasa leaders Ibrahim Ali and Zulkifli, who are viewed as right-wing Malays, and "then you have PAS, which is seen as very liberal in working with DAP".

Dzulkefly said Umno did this to show the entire spectrum of choices in ideology within the party.

"For voters, they will think they cannot go for Ibrahim or Zulkifli but in the end, many Malays chose Umno to 'save themselves' from the Pakatan scourge.

"They (the Malays) may view Umno as not that bad and in the end, this position they take will see them being sold out," he said.

"However, I believe many voters may have realised this now and regretted that they may have missed a golden opportunity to change the federal government."

Rural votes still with Umno

The PAS leader also conceded that a significant number of rural votes went to Umno and BN because they may have felt that they were left out of development.

At the same time, however, they have been buoyed by Umno's calls for Malay supremacy and to uphold Islam, which were played up by the mainstream media, including state-owned radio and television.

For example, in Sri Gading in Johor, which is a typical profile of a Malay constituency in the rural area, one could see Malays who have been left poor for

decades. And yet this constituency remains an Umno vote-bank.

Dzulkefly is pleased that the Pakatan government of Selangor will now focus on development in the Malay belt areas of Sungai Besar, Sabak Bernam, Tanjung Karang, Kuala Selangor and Hulu Selangor to improve their income and education levels.

"This was one way to win them over. Another is to have PAS leaders, such as the new state executive councillor Sallehan Mukhyi (Sabak assemblyperson) in charge of religion, to ensure the upliftment of the religious and moral aspects of the community, so they will not become an easy prey to vote buying and manipulation.

"This, as well as religious matters, are not entirely about religion but about living decently, with honour, to stand on their own two feet and to get the people out of the clutches of poverty," he said.

Yesterday, Dzulkefly claimed there had been vote buying on the last day of the recent general election campaign, in which some voters in his constituency were asked to take a religious vow to vote for BN to receive up to RM1,000 in cash each.

This has been described as "baseless and one-sided" by the eventual winner in the contest, Kuala Selangor MP Irmohizam Ibrahim.

A west coast phenomenon

Dzulkefly said this campaign of fear took place only in the west coast and not in Terengganu, which PAS nearly won back, or in Kelantan, which it retained despite losing a few seats.

In Terengganu, he said, PAS was confident of winning back the state, much like it was with Perak, and this was the reason why the PAS state leadership did well there.

"The fear of success did not worry the voters (there)... Terengganu is not at all disturbed by the phobia as the DAP and Chinese factors did not picture big on their agenda. In Perak, they knew fully well that PAS needed Chinese votes to win," he emphasised.

"Another factor going for PAS in Terengganu was that of popular cleric Ustaz Azhar Idrus, who is from Terengganu and also a PAS member - his talks are popular and he has reached out and attracted the masses," he said.

"And, in Kelantan, we have Tok Guru (former menteri besar) Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who has been a major pull factor for PAS to retain the state," he said.

This, Dzulkefly said, showed the differences in political outlook between the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and the west coast.

"What can work well in Terengganu will not in Selangor."

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