

**Delving into DAP's shock defeat**  
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ANALYSIS Euphoria during the campaign period has now turned to shock over Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud's defeat in the Teluk Intan by-election for DAP supporters.

Indeed, BN's triumph over Dyana was spectacular.

But there were several factors building up to her defeat, chief among them being disinterested outstation voters as the contest had no bearing on the balance of power.

Just this morning, Gerakan president Mah Siew Keong did not appear confident of his chances, with his aide lashing out at journalists for reporting Mah's remark urging the people of Teluk Intan not to allow outstation voters to decide the town's fate.

However, Mah got his wish when what started as a strong turnout this morning eventually dwindled, with only a total of 67.4 percent of voters casting their ballots when polls closed at 5pm.

This was in contrast to the 80.4 percent turnout in the 13th general election - the highest in Teluk Intan's electoral history.

Outstation voters failed to deliver

Outstation voters, largely youth and urbanites, who are the core support base for DAP, had failed to deliver.

In the absence of this, DAP could only fall back on their usual Chinese electorate, but most of them residing in the semi-rural constituency of Teluk Intan are older conservative voters, and they too did not deliver.

An example that fits this demography perfectly is Kampung Batu 12, a Chinese new village which DAP won by 68.5 percent in 2013 but this time was wrested by BN, which gained 51.5 percent of the votes.

Why the swing among conservative Chinese voters to BN?

"It could be a combination of voting along ethnic lines and also pragmatic considerations," pollster Merdeka Centre director Ibrahim Suffian (right) told Malaysiakini.

This trend is consistent with the Kajang by-election in March which also showed a swing in Chinese votes to BN when a change in the balance of power is not a factor like in a general

election and the “what's in it for me” mindset takes precedent.

In terms of pragmatic considerations, Mah is a local-born boy whose family has deep ties with the southern town and has served as a two-term MP there since 1999 before being defeated by DAP in 2008.

Mah also made a clear offer to the people of Teluk Intan, among them included obtaining a Unesco heritage recognition for the town's landmark Menara Condong (leaning tower) and setting up a university.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's promise to make Mah a federal minister if he wins was equally, if not even more, appealing. Not to mention, the numerous cases of enticements such as free hampers, especially among the poor.

Dyana's manifesto vague

In contrast, Dyana's manifesto had been less tangible and peppered with broad ideas such as empowering women and combating corruption, something that did not resonate significantly with an ageing electorate.

Commenting on this, Ibrahim said even DAP's social media campaign centred around Dyana's personality.

"It was not about what she wanted to do for Teluk Intan, the candidate was not really clear enough on her plans.

"The main lesson learnt is that voters cannot be taken for granted against an experienced candidate," he said.

Even though Chinese voters are the majority in Teluk Intan, these facts cut across racial lines as DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng too conceded that its support across all races fell.

While Lim may portray Dyana's defeat as a rejection of a Malay and a woman, DAP's failure to present an attractive offer was a bigger factor.

"It is back to the drawing board for DAP on fielding a newbie, despite the initial sentiments in their favour during the campaign, it eventually wore off and Dyana was exposed to several criticism," said Ibrahim.

An example was Dyana's failure to come clean on her mother's status in Malay rights group Perkasa which eventually came back to haunt her and brought her honesty into question, including her own status as a lawyer.

The dirty campaign, where Dyana was attacked relentlessly by Gerakan's ally, appeared to have worked.

DAP also failed to effectively market its novel concept of having a Malay candidate as it did in the Bukit Gelugor by-election which was presented as a celebration of its late veteran MP Karpal Singh or PKR marketing the Kajang by-election as the "Kajang Move".

Ultimately, Ibrahim said voters chose experience over novelty.

PAS supporters upset over hudud

Would things be different had DAP fielded a local candidate?

Not necessarily, said Ibrahim, pointing out that the party's vote bank of outstation voters did not deliver.

In terms of machinery, Dyana as a parachute candidate did cause resentment among DAP grassroots in the initial stages but this was quickly overcome as the campaign went into full swing.

The focus lies with the PAS machinery, with a senior PAS leader conceding to Malaysiakini that the party's hardcore members were upset at Dyana's anti-hudud stance and refused to campaign for her in the Malay heartland.

This had eventually prompted PAS to rope in its president Abdul Hadi Awang during the final dash of the campaigning to prop up Dyana.

However, Ibrahim said this was not a major factor as many traditional PAS members already voted against DAP in Teluk Intan in the last general election.

He pointed out the two state seats Pasir Bedamar and Changkat Jong in Teluk Intan had a collective majority of 11,919 votes in the favour of the opposition but this was not translated at the parliamentary level, which only saw a 7,313-vote majority for DAP in 2013.

This, he said, suggested split voting, where supporters in Changkat Jong had voted for PAS at the state level but voted against DAP at the federal level, thus it would not have made much difference this time.

Coming out of this by-election, Gerakan is expected to be buoyed by its mini-revival as it will join its peninsular counterpart MCA, whose senators are already sworn in, to take up positions in the cabinet.