

Kak Wan on right track as BN carrots set to fail

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ANALYSIS When the Permatang Pauh by-election campaign took off on April 25, keen political observers predicted a win for PKR's candidate Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

They said her victory is a "foregone conclusion".

This is, after all, a constituency willing to resist BN's carrot sticks of development and cash just to support its former MP, Anwar Ibrahim, since 1982.

BN is giving out carrots again, but this time, the coalition is saddled with a massive internal crisis.

No matter how BN leaders boast of "inter- and intra-unity" during this by-election campaign, the stark truth remains that all is not well within the coalition.

It's only too obvious, with the spat between former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and current Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak escalating by the day, with the senior leader calling for Najib's resignation.

Najib's failings

For two weeks, the voters in Permatang Pauh had a daily diet of Najib's failings.

Najib's failure to explain the alleged poor management of Putrajaya's investment company 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), questions surrounding the gruesome murder of Mongolian national Altantuya Shaariibuu with C4 explosives in 2006 by two of Najib's former bodyguards, plus his wife Rosmah Mansor's much-exposed lavish lifestyle, are the main topics dominating all Pakatan ceramah sessions across the constituency.

It does not help that BN has yet to cool public dismay over the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST), which is proving to be more and more burdensome to the people as days go by, especially with the cut in salary increases.

Pakatan is banking on these factors to tip the scales in their favour, so that Wan Azizah can hold the seat again until GE14 that will be due in 2018.

Possible low voter turn-out

However, if the result of the Rompin by-election is any indication, PKR must brace itself for a similar outcome in tomorrow's Permatang Pauh polls.

Lower voter turn-out in yesterday's Rompin by-election led to a significant slash in BN's

majority win against PAS.

PKR's worry, though, is not only the outstation voters, although its strategy director Sim Tze Tzin predicted a low voter turnout, at 68 percent compared with the 88 percent in 2013.

PKR suspects that there are about 6,000 outstation voters, while a PAS leader said about 3,000 of its members are in Permatang Pauh.

Voter fatigue, PAS members who are peeved with DAP and PKR's stand on hudud and those who are mesmerised by BN's sweet promises of development and change may be some of the reasons why voters may decide to ditch the polls or 'ubah' their votes.

With all its might in Putrajaya, BN has tried to put up a challenge to Pakatan's anti-GST campaign by diverting attention to the fall-outs in the Pakatan fold.

BN-controlled media have been busy churning tales of grave disunity among the Pakatan allies over PAS' president Abdul Hadi Awang's Private Member's Bill on hudud in Parliament.

Granny with a fan

Wan Azizah's ability to juggle two constituencies - she is also Kajang assemblywoman - and PKR's repeated move (four times) in fielding her as candidate in Permatang Pauh have been the fodder for BN's pointed attacks.

All sort of nicknames - some degrading ones for women - including 'nenek kipas' (granny with a fan) have been hurled at Wan Azizah.

The aim is to paint a picture of Wan Azizah (right) being too old, at 63, to run for the MP's post, compared with BN's 44-year old candidate Suhaimi Sabudin.

If these strategies work, PKR is staring at a shocking majority win of only between 2,000 and 5,000 votes, compared with its 11,721-majority win in the 2013.

This may, after all, be the "shocker" that BN campaign director and Umno vice-president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had promised before the onset of the campaign period late last month.

In the final analysis, the remaining question and the answer to who would win the Permatang Pauh seat is this: "Are the holes in people's pockets deep enough to send Najib a message to abolish the GST?"

Azizah and Suhaimi are contesting against PRM's Azman Othman Shah and Salleh Isahak, an independent candidate, for the parliamentary seat.

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