

Khalid's 'Vote BN' - blunder or sabotage?
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Did he say it or did he not? Was it a slip of tongue or was it something more sinister? For some, it's a non-issue. But the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition thinks otherwise.

So much so that government-controlled television stations are told to air the clip of Parti Keadilan Rakyat candidate Khalid Ibrahim saying "vote for BN" over and over again.

Last night, Khalid Ibrahim denied that he had made that remark at a ceramah last Saturday while campaigning in the crucial Ijok by-election.

Instead, he accused state-owned news agency Bernama of editing the clip and distorting his statement.

The opposition candidate claimed that he actually said "Jangan undi BN" (Don't vote BN) while the clip depicted him as saying "Undi BN".

"This is primary school politics," he told a ceramah in Batang Berjuntai yesterday while DAP stalwart and opposition leader Lim Kit Siang, who was also present, described the airing of the clip as "slanderous".

According to a source, this has now become a top campaign point for the ruling coalition and Information Minister Zainuddin Maidin has allegedly instructed all television stations to play the clip repeatedly in their news.

BN in heart and soul

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has also joined in the fray.

Speaking to reporters after a function in Taman Bukit Badong Timur this morning, he expressed "sympathy" for Khalid, a prominent corporate figure who once helmed a top government-linked company.

The deputy premier said the former chief executive of Permodalan Nasional Bhd still harboured a soft spot for BN despite being an opposition candidate.

"He (Khalid) made the slip up because in his heart and soul, he still cherishes BN which has done much for him," he was quoted as saying by Bernama.

He also said this proved that Umno and BN were instrumental in charting the course of the nation's development and defending its people despite the opposition claiming otherwise.

In view of this, Najib said the voters of Ijok must decide wisely on who they want to represent them.

At the same time, PKR is having a field day in quoting former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad - who was once leader of BN - where he asked voters to send a signal to the government.

For BN, however, this is a non-issue and television stations have all but ignored the Mahathir video clip.

Come tomorrow, Khalid will take on BN's K Parthiban in the contest for the state seat. The seat fell vacant following the death of BN incumbent K Sivalingam on April 4.

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