

Tension highest in Malay strongholds

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Malaysiakini team

Tension between members and supporters of the rival political parties facing off in Ijok is highest in Malay-majority electoral districts where the opposition has the greatest presence.

In Kampung Ijok - where PKR won about twice more than MIC in 2004 - about 250 Umno Youth's Gerak Gempur members exchanged taunts this morning with more than 100 PKR supporters while 25 police worked desperately to keep them apart.

Both groups hurled insults and warned the other to back off. At one point, the two groups edged closer until they faced off against each other with no more than a few police officers in between trying to prevent any untoward incident from occurring.

More police officers, however, managed to muscle their way between the two sides and ordered both to stay at least 50m away from one another and away from the entrance of the SK Kampung Ijok where the voting was taking place.

By 10am, the police officers had been beefed up by the arrival of two trucks filled with riot police.

"The ones who are rude are the Gerak Gempur youth, but their hot air will dissipate as the day gets hotter. You'll see them disappearing," said one CID officer.

Supporters separated

True enough, temperatures did not flare any higher than the first tense hours after voting began.

In Bukit Badong - also a Malay majority area where PKR won 260 more votes than MIC in 2004 - things got heated up at around 12:30pm when five police trucks moved after both BN and PKR supporters started shouting at each other.

The riot squad had to separate the supporters apart with chants of 'Altantuya' and 'jangan main belakang' (don't play backside) coming from PKR and BN respectively.

The stand-off lasted for 10 minutes after Selangor Menteri Besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo visited the Bukit Badong polling station. After shaking hands with PAS treasurer Dr Hatta Ramli, the crowd started jeering.

Hatta said the involvement of the FRU was unnecessary and unwarranted.

"The large police presence is scaring off the voters," he said, added that this is to BN's advantage if the Malays in the area did not vote.

In contrast, things remained calm in Chinese-majority areas, where voter turnout has been consistently high so far.

Tense for brief periods

In the Indian-majority areas of Sungai Darah and Tuan Mee, the atmosphere had also been tense, albeit for brief periods, with BN supporters taunting PKR supporters near the polling station.

In Sungai Darah, the opposition supporters told malaysiakini that eggs and water bottles were thrown at them earlier.

The party's Arau division chief Hashim Bakar, 56 showed his egg-stained shirt and related his story.

"The mood was tense for about 30 minutes, they kept shouting at us. Next thing we knew, eggs and bottles were being thrown at us.

"The clash lasted for several minutes until the police arrived to calm the situation," he said.

Meanwhile, PKR's Khalid Ibrahim was greeted with cheers from about 100 of his supporters when he turned up to visit the Sungai Darah polling station.

Asked to comment on the egg and bottle throwing incident earlier Khalid said: "I feel we should stop all this.

"Most attempts to provoke us basically come from the nature of BN, they call it gempur (battle). Keadilan is not gempur," he said.

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