

**10 reasons why Parthiban won**  
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**K Kabilan**

Here are 10 reasons why Barisan Nasional's MIC candidate K Parthiban defeated Parti Keadilan Rakyat's Khalid Ibrahim in the Ijok state seat by-election last Saturday.

For the record, Partiban, 38, polled in 5,884 votes and Khalid, 61, garnered 4,034, winning by an increased majority of 1,850 votes.

Many pundits rightly called this a close contest and it turned out to be one, despite BN retaining the seat with an additional 201 votes from its 2004 general election tally.

Then, incumbent state assemblyperson K Sivalingam defeated another PKR candidate and an Independent with a majority of 1,649. Sivalingam's sudden death on April 4 resulted in this hotly contested by-election.

The 10 reasons are:

### **1. Cikgu vs corporate figure**

Ijok is a semi-urban-cum-rural constituency with a Malay-majority electorate, followed by Indians and Chinese. Most of the elderly voters are either small-time businessmen or people in the agricultural sector – either as landowners or workers.

Basically, these voters all fall into the category of the working class, lower middle-class and a sprinkle of upper middle-class.

Thus, they are more at ease with a candidate who falls into the same category as them. In that sense, Parthiban fits in this profile for he was a teacher in the local schools – someone revered by the local community.

On the other hand, Khalid came with a Tan Sri title and a corporate image. He looked far too sophisticated for the simple voters.

And the BN capitalised on this, at every turn labeling him as a high-flier who doesn't understand kampung folks and that Parthiban on the other hand was one of theirs.

This personality manipulation nicely falls into the second reason.

### **2. Locally born and being there with them**

Although both the candidates were local born, in the course of the campaign it was Parthiban who managed to make maximum use of this tag.

His plus point was that he was not only a local born, he was raised there, worked there and more importantly, lived there. People saw him regularly in the constituency – mostly in Batang Berjuntai.

Shopkeepers referred to him as their Cikgu. Whenever he went on a house-to-house campaign, people knew him. He was one of them.

On the other hand, Khalid, as was pointed out by many voters, does not live in Batang Berjuntai or Ijok. He has his house in a posh area in Kuala Lumpur. BN took every opportunity to tell this to the voters and this ploy worked very well.

The difference between the candidates was stark. Parthiban played the part of a kampung folk, speaking in Bahasa Malaysia (to the Malay voters) and in Tamil eloquently, asking them about the clogged drains and street lights while Khalid sounded too educated, talking about a new economy plan for Ijok!

This difference in the issues campaigned by the two candidates is the third reason.

### **3. Clogged drains and broken fences**

Parthiban was a Kuala Selangor district councillor before he was nominated to run for the Ijok seat. In his time as a councillor, he had brought about small changes for the people of Kuala Selangor and its neighbouring areas.

It was said that he had always tried to do something whenever he was approached to solve a problem.

And he carried this attitude with him on his campaigns. When a voters tells him the drains in the housing estate were clogged, his response would be that he would get someone to clear it. And he did just that.

Broken cements in houses, uneven roads, mending fences – you name it and he got that done.

Khalid on the other hand came in as a corporate figure who knew how the economy of the state should be handled. He spoke about a new development plan for Ijok. He asked for a debate with Parthiban on how to make Ijok prosperous.

All these failed to inspire the voters. They wanted the candidate's personal touch in solving their problems and they got that from Parthiban.

### **4. Samy's personal touch**

Going into the by-election, the MIC in this area was in turmoil - there was internal strife among the local party chieftains and the late Sivalingam had also been accused of being arrogant, corrupt and ineffective over the many years he had been the representative in the constituency.

The Indian voters were dissatisfied. MIC president S Samy Vellu took it upon himself to change all that. His mission was simple – to get all the 3,369 Indian votes in Ijok.

To achieve that, he campaigned religiously to the point of him being labeled as the candidate himself. He cajoled the Indian voters, he scolded them, he hugged them, he gave them sweeteners and goodies, and he succeeded in getting them to vote for Parthiban.

On the other hand, PKR did not have an answer to the personal touch Samy Vellu had put into

the campaign. They did not have a single Indian leader who could go into the estates and win over the voters.

Their only trump card was S Nallakaruppan, but he obviously needed more support than what he got.

There is also another reason why Samy Vellu won this contest for the Indian votes - that's reason number 5.

## **5. Indian voters won't change**

Historically Indian voters in the country have been very loyal to BN and that trend continued in Ijok.

Despite widespread dissatisfaction with their previous state representative over some unfulfilled promises, it didn't take Samy Vellu long to convince the Indian voters that things would look brighter for them under the continued rule of the BN.

All unhappiness were forgotten when Samy Vellu knocked on their doors, begging for their votes.

Samy Vellu himself told malaysiakini that he spend hours after hours talking to the voters, explaining things to them on why they should vote for BN and winning them over.

Adding to this was the fact that the BN held nothing back in ensuring they got the Indian votes. This was especially true in Tuan Mee electoral area when on the eve of the polling, Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak promised land titles for the 800 Indian voters – an issue which was unresolved by Sivalingam for many years.

## **6. Money, money, money**

Tuan Mee Indian voters were not the only beneficiaries of the BN's generosity. Ijok and its surrounding areas changed overnight from a sleepy hollow to a town of traffic lights, new roads and better drainage systems.

New mosques, surau, religious schools were promised. Chinese schools and Tamil schools were granted allocation for new buildings. Housing estates had streetlights and public telephone boxes.

Many voters were also granted land titles in the run-up to the by-election. Strangely most of them have been fighting for such titles for more than 30 years.

And then Selangor Menteri Besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo adopted the constituency, stating that he would personally oversee the progress of Ijok and the well-being of the Malay voters.

Samy Vellu admitted that Ijok got 10 years of projects in 10 days. No one knows the amount of money that has been doled out by the government. Some estimate it to be close to RM100 million while a conservative figure stands at about RM70.5 million [see chart below].

PKR did not have the means to allocate such big amount to win votes.

## **7. Three-term representative K Sivalingam**

The reason why BN had to spend so much is largely due to the previous state assembly person's failure to do anything in Ijok. In fact, all that he had gained from the voters was a bad reputation.

It was not just the Indian voters that didn't like him. Even the Malay and Chinese voters felt that Sivalingam only came to see them to ask for votes during the elections.

The area's MIC was also split because of this. However, the positive spin the BN put out was that Parthiban was better than Sivalingam and that he would do all that Sivalingam failed to do.

The battle cry was that there was no harm in giving this rookie a chance to correct all the wrongdoings of the dead veteran.

Voters were asked to give BN a second chance, saying that Parthiban was an energetic and resourceful person who would get things done.

Voters had a glimpse of what Parthiban could do while he was out campaigning, and for them the small issues that he had handled was one of the key factors they voted for him.

Voters' sentiments were that national issues, as raised by PKR, could be handled by the state and federal leadership. They wanted a candidate to look after them, and Parthiban showed them that he could do that better than both Sivalingam and Khalid.

## **8. The Najib-Anwar proxy fight**

This by-election stood out as a proxy fight between Najib and PKR adviser Anwar Ibrahim.

There is no doubt that PKR still retained some support in the Malay area and Anwar's speeches were well attended.

However in these speeches, the opposition party's concentration was towards the shortcomings of Najib, and the weaknesses of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's government.

Voters attended the ceramah to listen to all the juicy bits but they were not informed on how Khalid would be effective and different from Parthiban. The voters did not have an informed idea on why they should vote for Khalid.

Thus it has been the case of better the devil you know than the angel you don't.

## **9. Abdullah's surprise visit**

While Samy Vellu was busy convincing Indian voters to vote for BN, Khir and Najib were hard at work at the Malay areas, especially areas in which support for PKR was high.

The ruling coalition gave out land titles and other monetary rewards but still until the last moment, the edge was with PKR.

And then on Thursday, Abdullah came visiting three sensitive Malay areas and this magically swung the favour back to BN.

The premier's personal visit was enough to tie up the Malay voters' sentiments with BN. His image as a 'clean' politician was still strong in the kampungs and these rural settlers thought his government should be given another chance.

And thus Parthiban benefitted from the PM's visit.

## **10. One-sided media coverage**

And finally the media too had an important role in ensuring Parthiban's victory.

He was portrayed as a young candidate, who would work hard for the voters. His family responsibilities were played up – he had taken care of his siblings since the death of their parents.

The fact that he was a bachelor was also a media feel-good story. Newspapers and television stations showed him smiling to everyone, looking energetic and ready to help at any moment.

On the other hand, PKR's election campaign was overshadowed by Anwar. Dailies, if at all, carried pictures of Anwar, and that too at most time to belittle his charges against Najib and the government. Little space and time were given to Khalid.

News about Khalid in the final stages of the campaigns was about his role in the purchase of Guthrie shares and that did not portray him in a positive light.

## Ijok by-election bonanza

Date	Allocations	Value
April 15	Construction of Ubudiah mosque at Taman Purnama	RM5 million
April 18	Public facilities (roads, street lighting, drainage etc)	RM36 million
April 19	<b>NOMINATION DAY</b>	
April 20	Refurbishment of Al-Awwabin mosque	RM800,000
April 21	Land titles for more than 400 lots	Unknown
	Upgrading SMK Raja Muda Musa	Unknown
	New hall for SRJK (C) Yuk Chih	RM800,000
April 22	Kpg Bukit Badong mosque upgrading	RM300,000
	Rehabilitating landfill	RM2.3 million
April 23	Grants and approval letters to seven mosques, 16 suraus and six religious schools	RM3.5 million
	To build an Islamic center in Taman Pancaran	RM200,000
April 24	New health clinic in Batang Berjuntai	RM16 million
	Upgrading existing clinics in the area	RM4 million
April 26	Additional funds for SRJK (C) Yuk Chih	RM200,000
April 27	Land titles for Tuan Mee estate workers. Surveys to be conducted within 3 to 4 months	Unknown
	Batang Berjuntai multi purpose hall	RM800,000
	Refurbishment of road leading to Ijok chinese cemetery	RM500,000
	Rebuilding of Chin Loong temple, destroyed by fire	RM100,000
	Construction of 'Datuk Kong' chinese temple	RM10,000
	Batang Berjuntai recreation centre	RM5,000
April 28	<b>POLLING DAY</b>	

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