

Umno's politics of desperation
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All pro-government groups and individuals can be expected to be dancing over the 'grave' of post-Ijok Parti Keadilan Rakyat.

But is the party as dead as they say? Did PKR actually lose more than it gained in this little Kuala Selangor town? What is the real significance of Ijok?

While my colleagues expose and explore the more controversial evidence, this article will deal with conclusions gleamed from indisputable facts.

Contrary to media spin regarding BN's increased majority, PKR actually gained more votes than it did in 2004 [see chart].

**Ijok by-election
PKR votes**

Polling district	Votes for PKR		Difference
	2004	2007	
Sungai Darah	144	192	48
Jaya Setia	458	327	-131
Bukit Badong	858	826	-32
Batang Berjuntai	Bestari Utara	641	321
	Bestari Selatan	338	
Kampung Ijok	420	492	72
Pekan Ijok	306	584	278
Simpang Ijok	472	490	18
Tuan Mee	116	142	26
Total	3,432	4,032	600

Azlan Zamhari / Malaysiakini

It is thus a completely objective conclusion that more people support PKR now than during the 2004 general election.

This leads us to hypothesise about the allegedly increased number of people who voted for BN in this by-election. What were their motivations?

Was it because in the three years following the Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's takeover, the once golden "Mr (anything but) Clean" has done wonders in his tenure as Prime Minister and exceeded the expectations of Malaysians?

Was it because Ijok's citizens are overjoyed with the amount of development, attentiveness and care the BN has shown them over forty years?

Even the most cursory reading on Ijok or Malaysian politics would reveal that these explanations are simply untenable, leaving the discerning individual no choice but to pay heightened heed to the allegations and evidence (audio recordings of vote buying, missing ballot papers, phantom buses, etc) of government tampering with the electoral process.

Writing on the wall

PKR will be hard at work compiling more evidence of electoral fraud and irregularities over the coming days, but let's look at the ground they had already gained well before polling day.

Anyone can see that the resources and sheer weight BN threw behind this campaign was shocking – all this for a seat that would have made no difference to either the Selangor or federal government. Why?

BN ideology is bankrupt and has long been in terminal decline – racism and rampant corruption is never tolerated for long in any society.

Ijok's biggest revelation was how well BN themselves understood this. They threw the kitchen sink at PKR in Ijok because they knew that to lose even one electoral inch to the only party that can and will lead Malaysia's first political revolution is to take its first step to guaranteed extinction.

Two of PKR's core messages are indisputably of universal appeal – a truly multiethnic mould of politics, and a cleaner, more efficient government at every level.

The only reason Umno (the only truly relevant BN party) and their preferential policies that give rise to a bottomless pit of corruption can maintain its slimy grip on Malaysian politics is incumbency, and the power that comes with it.

Why else choose a corrupt, supremacist party over one that is built on principles of social equality and just distribution of wealth? Why choose the champions of Malay rights when we can choose a champion of Malaysian rights?

It is almost impossible to see how BN's divisive and unscrupulous brand of politics could ever return to the forefront of Malaysian politics once the reins of government slip from its hands.

If incumbency is BN's only power, they will defend it like a cornered animal.

The real racists

Of course, the iron grip over the mainstream media has been used to turn the ideological tables on the opposition as well, relentlessly accusing PKR of 'playing the racial card' in Ijok.

Thankfully, discerning Malaysians immediately recognised the stunning hypocrisy of

keris-wielding, bloodthirsty fear-mongers calling their opponents racists.

This attack is best understood as an attempted pre-emptive strike against the aspect of PKR that worries BN the most.

Seeing the thunderous response Anwar (PKR adviser Anwar Ibrahim) and other Keadilan leaders have received as they articulate their visions of multi-ethnic politics, BN once again turns to their media organs to sell the unsellable – to make the multi-ethnic party appear racist and the racially divided ones appear as saviours of interracial harmony.

BN at least credits the Malaysian public by not depending on media spin entirely. Ijok has clearly shown that they are ready to defend their incumbency to the very last with every means possible.

The term 'every means possible' should be taken in its most literal context.

Using the media to paint PKR as the violent hooligans is a direct parallel to the allegations of racism – a strategy of deflecting attention from your greatest faults by projecting them onto your opponent.

Evidence carried in malaysiakini, blogs and elsewhere will demonstrate this clearly.

Umno's dependence on violence

Ijok showed in the starkest terms possible how far Umno is willing to go in order to stay in power – 'dulu, kini dan selamanya', as they like to say. The core of this strategy is as simple as it is effective: violence.

Component parties have been complicit in this act, spreading rumours the night before the election of impending riots, should the opposition be voted into power.

Malicious as this fear-mongering is, making this atmosphere of violence frighteningly tangible falls to the likes of Umno Youth, who took whatever opportunity they could in Ijok to actually physically assault people and damage property in a concerted show of force.

Slogans like "Gerak Gempur" and "Pemuda Umno Gempur, PKR Terkubur" are starkly unmistakable examples of the ethos of violence that is insidiously being propagated within the younger ranks of Umno.

Again, the reason for this is simple: they know full well that there is no other way Umno can remain relevant and in power.

Any notion that any particular ethnic group is inclined towards such violence should be rejected without question. The core issue here is the politics of desperation.

Umno has not always been a party with such violent tendencies. As a Malay party, there must have been periods where core Malay values such as gentleness and refinement of culture were the mainstay of the party.

A turning point must clearly have been when and increasingly rotting Umno realised that it is only a matter of time before the non-Malays desert BN for the Malay-led party that offers them the Holy Grail of non-Malay politics: the replacement of discriminatory policies with a policy of

equal opportunity and justice for all.

Again, if unseating Umno ever comes within striking distance, what possible reason could the other component parties have to fight to return to power a party tarnished with the darkest stains of racial supremacist thinking and endless corruption?

PKR has taken the first steps towards nearing that striking distance, and it is only a matter of time before it is achieved.

Ijok has given PKR a greater platform to articulate its irresistible vision, showcase the full calibre of its advisor and leaders, and has forced the current government to respond to the vilest cases of corruption.

Evidence that is being processed will reveal just how violent Umno is willing to become to stem this tide of justice and retain their last vestiges of all-important incumbency.

In light of these threats, that which is right must be defended fervently and without fear.

Giving in to threats and intimidation will condemn Malaysia to an eternity of destitution and darkness. Our dedication to staying the cause must be sustained by faith in the inevitable light at the end of the tunnel.

Visionaries can see that the writing on the wall doesn't say "Ijok proves Keadilan and Anwar are irrelevant," . It says "Racism and corruption can only be defended with violence, justice will prevail."

The time has come for Malaysians to stand brave in the struggle to uphold that justice.

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