

**Pakatan outreach extends to UK**  
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As rumours of a snap general election intensify, Pakatan Rakyat is taking its fight overseas with the launch of their Friends for Pakatan Rakyat (FoPR) club in London yesterday.

NONEFoPR chairperson Brain Morais estimated that 20,000-30,000 Malaysians live in London alone.

They represent a potential political support group that could channel its energies and resources through the club.

For the launch, Pakatan top guns flew in from Malaysia to massage the morale of overseas supporters and run through a lengthy checklist of BN blemishes, whilst allaying concerns about problems within the coalition, during a five-hour wide-ranging forum.

Above all, the message was to exude confidence in Pakatan's ability to win the next general election, adding that the Sibu by-election was the precursor to BN's downfall.

NONEPKR supreme council member Zaid Ibrahim (right) said this has led to a situation where BN would attack imaginary enemies or create dodgy excuses to taint rivals.

Among others, he cited the banning of cartoon books by Zulkiflee Anwar Ulhaque, better known as Zunar, and attempts to taint his Manchester rendezvous with fugitive blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin as a criminal act.

"(BN) are in a state of panic, they now see enemies everywhere," said Zaid, who later stated confidently that Pakatan's takeover of Putrajaya is inevitable and near.

Withholding dissolution

As the cheerleading baton passed on to PAS treasurer Hatta Ramli, he said BN bigwigs such as Umno vice-president Hishammuddin Hussein have dropped wide hints that a general election is looming.

NONE"Which is September I guess. If it is, I think we will win big," said Hatta (left).

He then mooted the possibility of Pakatan-held states of Kelantan, Kedah, Penang and Selangor choosing not to dissolve their respective state legislative assemblies as a tactical manoeuvre.

"I'm trying to persuade our leaders.... I hope, or we hope, that the states now controlled by Pakatan will not join the fray and will not dissolve out state assembly.

"We have a duty to do. We have been given the task to rule for five years. We cannot run away from our responsibilities," he said.

Hatta said that should a snap election be called, this scenario will allow Pakatan to concentrate its efforts on capturing other states, particularly the "difficult" states of Johor, Sabah and Malacca.

BN's only innovation

The final speaker, Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar, took a more nuanced perspective and invited her audience to appreciate the fact that unlike the BN, Pakatan is open to criticism and willing to improve itself.

NONE "You shouldn't choose Pakatan just because we are the antithesis to BN. We have our weaknesses, but we have also been making progress," she said.

Eager to quote policy positions, she cited successes like the implementation of Selangor Select Committee on Competency, Accountability and Transparency which acts as a internal check-and-balance mechanism.

"(Pakatan) distinguishes the power of the state, the state assembly and the powers of the executive," said Nurul Izzah, adding that with the BN, the lines are opaque.

NONE Nurul Izzah (left) also took a jibe at Umno's apparent attempts to "outsource" its racial agenda to controversial Malay rights advocate Perkasa.

"In the 10th Malaysia plan, innovation is said to be the main driver of economic growth. The only innovation (thus far) seems to be Perkasa," she quipped.

"Ibrahim Ali... he is a creature who has to be avoided at all cost... The prime minister has allowed the voice of these narcissistic, narrow-minded, dangerous Malays and allowed (Dr) Mahathir (Mohamad) to back them up, to shore up support, supposedly for Umno, at what cost?"

NONE Other personalities at the event were fugitive blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin, private investigator in exile P Balasubramaniam (in red shirt), and Tumpat MP Kamaruddin Jaafar.

The event was held at the Conway Hall, which is reputed as a hub for free speech and previously a platform for speakers such as author Salman Rushdie.

For Pakatan, the cost of flying its leaders to London will be far outweighed by the votes it can achieve, if FoPR can get even half as many Malaysian Londoners to make the trip back home.

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