

**Pakatan goes on the offensive to defend S'gor
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With Umno completing the first round of its "Save Selangor" campaign this weekend, the Pakatan Rakyat-led government is now set to begin its counter-attack to whittle away the issues raised by the opposition.

The effort is to be carried out by the Selangor state communications squad, starting on the first day of the fasting month, which is expected to fall on Aug 11.

Selangor Umno went on the offensive on July 23 in an effort to recapture moneybank Selangor in the next general election. It featured former PKR Youth chief Ezam Mohd Noor, now with Umno, and Selangor Umno deputy chief Noh Omar among the top guns at its 19 ceramah sessions.

Ezam, in one of his early talks, blasted his former mentor and parliamentary opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, describing him as a traitor and a tool for the Jews. Other issues bandied in the Umno talks included illegal sand mining and the water issue.

Selangor Umno divided?

Ironically, former menteri besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo was sidelined in this first phase of the campaign, leading to speculation that Umno Selangor is divided, with one faction led by Noh and the other by Khir.

NONEUmno, through its "Save Selangor Darul Ehsan" secretariat, will be on a one-month break beginning next week and will resume its win-Selangor-back onslaught after Hari Raya in the middle of September.

This is when Khir (left) is also expected to play a bigger role.

As Umno takes a breather, the Selangor information officer Badrul Amin Bahron said the Pakatan government would begin its explanation sessions in all mosques in the state.

"We have started printing circulars and will be distributing them in response to the allegations made against us. We will also have short religious talks during the sessions," he said.

Badrul Amin, who is a religious scholar, told Malaysiakini that the explanatory sessions would be held in mosques because Muslims frequented mosques during Ramadan.

Besides this, he said, Selangor has allocated RM15 million for its efforts to disseminate information and part of this includes distributing the state-owned publication, Selangorkini.

"We will print more copies, from 60,000 now to 300,000 copies until after Hari Raya," said Badrul Amin, who is also a PKR supreme council member.

Umno: moving away from sand mining

Meanwhile, Selangor Umno information chief Shukor Idrus (left) said the state Umno was satisfied that the three weeks of its campaign had shown some significant change in the perception of the people.

NONE "The ceramah sessions held in Klang and Kota Raja saw numbers excess of 1,000 attending, even more than 2,000 in some instances," said Shukor, who is also Kuang assemblyperson.

In the second phase, he said, Umno will not use the sand issue, as it had done during the first phase.

"From the feedback we received, the people have come to accept it. We will focus on other issues in the

second phase," he added.

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