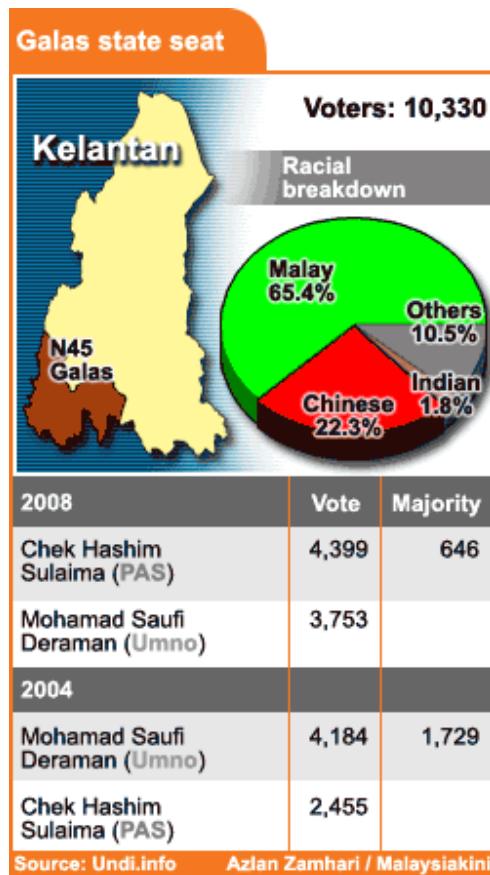


Ku Li 'not a liability' for BN in Galas by-election
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Umno deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin today argued that PAS fears Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's influence going into the Galas by-election.

Brushing aside claims that Razaleigh will be a liability to the BN, he said the ruling coalition does not think the former finance minister's stand on Kelantan's oil royalties will backfire on them.



"We respect his views. He gave his views as a leader in Kelantan, but he is also aware of the federal government's policy on this," he said after chairing the National Social Council meeting in Putrajaya today.

"I'm sure we will be able to clarify this issue. Tengku Razaleigh not only understands this issue, you could say he is an expert."

Galas, one of three state seats under the Gua Musang parliamentary constituency, fell vacant following the death of PAS incumbent Che Hashim Sulaima.

The state seat, which has 10,330 voters, consists of 65.4% Malay, 22.3% Chinese, 1.8% Indian and 10.5% others, mostly Orang Asli.

Galas is considered an Umno stronghold.

However, it fell to PAS in the 2008 general election with Chinese voters in Gua Musang town apparently swinging against Umno.

Muhyiddin pointed out that Tengku Razaleigh's appointment as BN election director for the coming by-election will only galvanize their campaign as he is synonymous with Gua Musang where Galas is located.

"He holds huge influence over the locals because he is largely known to them personally, be it Malays, Chinese or Indians... that is why PAS is very concerned about its chances," he said.

When asked if Umno would consider fielding Razaleigh as their candidate for Galas, Muhyiddin said they will first discuss the matter with him by virtue of his position as the party's Galas division chief.

"By convention, we will give more than enough room for the division chief to first come up with his list of preferred candidates. We will discuss it first, and whether or not he will offer himself as candidate is up to him."

Meanwhile, Muhyiddin said he believes that MIC president S Samy Vellu's decision to step down in January after 32 years at the helm of his party is a positive move that will help the

party remain relevant to the Indian community and the BN coalition.

He said his move will especially help young leaders in the MIC come to the forefront and lead the party into the next general election.

"I believe this will allow MIC's leaders to continue with his stellar performance, and maybe even better," he said.

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