



Ku Li not without options in political chess game
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COMMENT In the political game of pre-emption, the hand being dealt by Najib Razak and Muhyiddin Yassin to Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah for the Galas by-election is viewed as shrewd.

They or their minions have asked the Umno dissident to not only lead the BN campaign but also name the candidate to fight PAS for the recapture of the seat located in Razaleigh's bailiwick of Gua Musang, long regarded as a safe bet until it fell to the Islamic party in the 2008 general election.

Razaleigh is abroad and will return after the Election Commission meets on Oct 6 to decide the nomination and polling dates. This gives him enough time to mull his options.

But first things first.

In the psychological game of political warfare, PAS got off the first shot. It told Umno that if it was really interested in Malay unity, it would be help by leaving Galas uncontested.

That was clever positioning by PAS. They know full well Umno, as the preponderant political power, simply cannot allow any Malay majority seat that is vacant to go uncontested, notwithstanding its desire for Umno-PAS talks in the quest of an elusive Malay solidarity.

PAS did not stop there.

They reminded Deputy Prime Minister and by-election lead campaigner Muhyiddin that the people of Manek Urai were still waiting for the RM7 million bridge he promised voters last year should they vote BN.

PAS retained Manek Urai by a whisker and motorists in the constituency have still to use the bridge in single file – a torturous imposition.

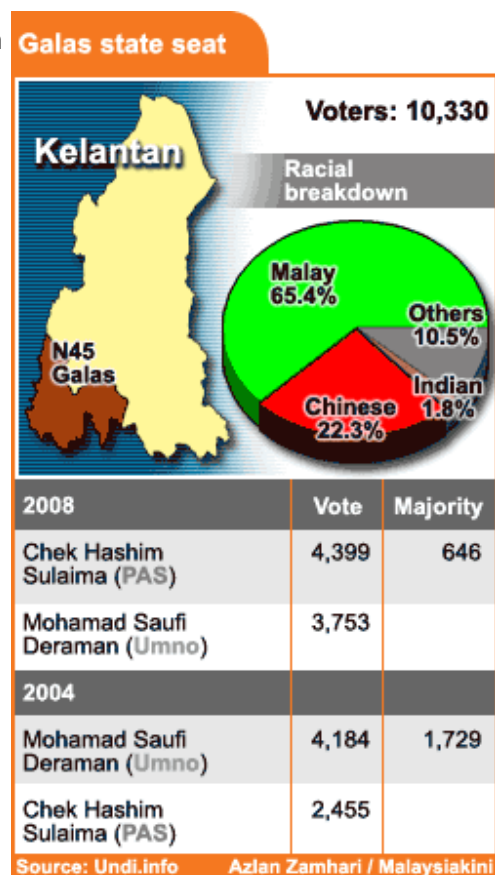
Hard put to refuse

The initial plays were all PAS' to make before Muhyiddin weighed in with his brand of political cunning.

Knowing that Razaleigh has re-endearred himself to PAS by siding with the Kelantan government on the oil royalty issue, he said Umno's most prominent internal critic was particularly adept for leading the BN charge.

Razaleigh, who harbours hopes of restoring what he considers to be a derelict Umno to past glory, is hard put to refuse the offer.

In fact Razaleigh, often aloof in his aristocratic disdain for the sordid goings-on in Umno, has averred that he



ought to get involved.

He has to. And not just because Galas is in his bastion of Gua Musang, but also because the 73-year-old prince cannot remain attenuated from party politics for too long and still sustain the notion that it is his manifest destiny to lead Umno and the nation.

Never mind many feel his hopes of Umno's restoration are delusional because the aristocratic ideal of noblesse oblige which motivates the Kelantan prince - and before him, Onn Jaafar, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Abdul Razak and Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman - is moribund in Malaysian society; Ku Li has simply to try.

A man must do what he has to do.

Set pre-condition

As such Razaleigh could set as a pre-condition - the granting of oil royalty to Kelantan by the federal government before he elects to lead BN's campaign for Galas.

After all, the grant would be consistent with the views on party and national restoration that Razaleigh has been articulating in the post-March 2008 period of Malaysian politics, an astutely cultivated stance of remaining above the partisan fray while angling to lead a national unity government in the face of Umno-BN's collapse from advanced decadence and Pakatan Rakyat's inability to credibly fill the void.

Surreal?

Not really, if you concede the point that the tectonic shifts to the national political landscape wrought by the tsunami have made Malaysian politics fecund with the unexpected.

If Umno agrees with the hypothetical pre-condition, PAS can respond by conceding the 12th by-election since the tsunami uncontested.

One piece of gallantry deserves another.

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