

Galas: Campaign kicks off with khalwat allegation
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Less than 24 hours after PAS unveiled their candidate for the Galas by-election, pro-Umno blogs have started unleashing attacks on his character.

Quoting the blogs, party organ *Umno Online* had also cast aspersions on PAS candidate Dr Muhammad (*left*), insinuating that he had been caught committing *khalwat* (close proximity) before.

"Is it true that the PAS candidate was caught for khalwat?"

"If it is, it is something not very surprising considering that Dr Zulkefli is not just a 'recycled' candidate but there are also rumours that he was previously caught for *khalwat* with his current wife, Ramelah Mat Jusoh," said the portal.

The portal also claimed, quoting blogs, that the incident had taken place a long time ago and that the couple now have 10 children.

However, this claim has been vehemently rubbished by Dr Zulkefli himself, a general practitioner and the Gua Musang PAS acting chief.

In a text message to *Malaysiakini*, he said that the woman in question was actually his mother and that his wife was someone else.

"This is outright slander. You can check with the state religious department in Kelantan or anywhere in Malaysia.

"I don't even smoke. I hope Allah forgives those who have committed the sin of slander," said Zulkefli, who had in the past stood against Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah three times and lost.

'That's his problem'

However, senior Umno leaders are rising above the mudslinging and washing their hands off it.

Kelantan liaison committee chairperson Mustapa Mohamed also played down the allegations, saying that Umno would prefer to focus on the strengths of their candidate.

When asked, he said, "That is his problem. With us, we just prefer to talk about our own candidate."

"We cannot depend on the weaknesses of others, we have to depend on our own strength," he said when met at the sidelines of the Umno general assembly today.

Umno is set to announce its candidate this Sunday.

The state assembly seat fell vacant after PAS state assemblyperson Che Hashim Sulaima, who had been battling colon cancer, passed away late last month after a relapse.

Hashim won the Galas seat with a majority of 646 votes in the last general election, against

incumbent Saufi Deraman of BN.

The state constituency has 10,330 voters consisting of 65.4 percent Malays, 22.3 percent Chinese and 1.8 percent Indians.

Most of the remaining 10.5 percent are Orang Asli, who number around 2,000 in Galas.

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