

BN lands heavily in Galas, PAS takes it light and easy
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With one third of the nine-day campaigning period for the Galas by-election over, BN continue to pound home the development they claim to have brought and prick at the hypersensitive issue of land, while the PAS campaign continues to be lukewarm and by their own admission, reactive.

NONEDespite the promise by BN election director for Galas, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, that that the campaign will be handled mostly by local leaders, BN ministers have continued their by-election pilgrimage to Galas non-stop.

Programme after programme saw ministers arriving on a daily basis promising more goodies for the area as the BN election machinery churned out billboards in a poster war touting development projects, schools and other amenities that it has built.

There are also posters questioning what has the PAS-led Kelantan government done for the area in the 20 years that it ruled the state.

The poster of Premier Najib visiting Kelantan MB Nik Aziz also made a comeback as well as one touting projects in Manek Urai which was completed despite the BN having lost in the by-election.

NONEBN heavyweights also continue to hit out at the PAS-led state government, putting the blame for land problems right in front of the state's doorstep, citing problems in relation to the land requisitioned for Ladang Rakyat, delayed Orang Asli land titles and other problems involving the award of titles to pioneers.

PAS however replied yesterday that the real problem rests not with them but with the federal government's delay in amending the National Land Code to allow for Orang Asli to be issued titles. Previously, Orang Asli were not allowed to hold titles, claimed PAS.

Possible major setback

azlanThis issue may be a major setback for PAS as the state government had to struggle with the lengthy problem of land claims and other matters, especially since land is under the purview of the state.

But then again, this strategy may backfire on the BN as most locals still remember that it was the coalition that ruled the state in the 1980s when large swathes of their lands were appropriated by the state with but meagre compensation.

This is something which is still a sore point for locals till today.

BN's strategy thus far seems to be an attempt to tighten their hold over the Orang Asli communities, long known to be 'white areas', strongholds for the ruling coalition.

Indeed most of the ministerial visits happen to land in Orang Asli areas. This may jive with some experts who believe that the Orang Asli hold the key to victory.

Slow and steady

Despite being under heavy attack by the BN, the PAS campaign continues to move at a sedate pace as the party says that it is still in the preliminary stages of letting the electorate know their candidate and show that he is a viable one with the ability to engage with the public.

NONEQuizzed if the party plans to roll out their own big guns and move to minimise the damage that the BN's attack is doing to their cause, the PAS election director for Galas, Abdul Fatah Harun, said that there is no need as none of BN's attacks against them so far had any significant effect.

He added that they will wait and see what issues that BN is bringing to the fore and only respond if the issues affects them negatively.

This does not seem to be the modus operandi of other Pakatan components who came down in support of PAS, however, as instead of simply reacting, they brought national issues to the mix, trying to sway the voting public.

azlanThis is something which may work against PAS, as it can turn off locals who may give no mind to national issues like the economy.

But unlike the BN, it seems Pakatan's strategy is not to focus on the Orang Asli but target the Chinese community that some say is the real kingmaker. This may stem from claims that it was Chinese votes who turned the tide in 2008 for the late PAS candidate Che Hashim Sulaima.

Quizzed about the support for PAS from non-Malays, Abdul Fatah said that the Chinese look promising, while the Orang Asli are difficult to judge.

A hint perhaps to which group they are gunning for.

With six more days of campaigning to go, it is interesting to see if PAS will start to go on the offensive in the face of BN's onslaught or continue to play their wait-and-see game.

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