

**BN 'long knives' out in Galas**  
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ANALYSIS Two more days till crunch time and the BN propaganda machine has upped the ante of its campaigning in Galas. After the banner war it declared belittling PAS' track record in ruling Kelantan, posters now appear that attack the Islamic party's leaders and candidate.

Posters have begun to appear on utility poles and walls depicting less than admirable allegations against prominent PAS leaders since two days ago.

One poster featured the image of Kelantan exco member Husam Musa and questioned the state government hold-up in federal land development agency Kesedar's housing projects. The posters say the housing schemes are being denied land by the state, the land going instead to PAS cronies.

NONE Another poster took a dig at the earlier khalwat allegations made against the party's candidate, this time questioning his marital status, the Malay phrase "Sudah kahwin ke belum?" adorning the leaflets posted around Galas.

In a daring move, another series of posters took a stab at Kelantan MB Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat himself. The posters titled "30 dalil kenapa Nik Aziz tak boleh jadi MB" questioned his fitness to rule the east coast state.

While no BN logos adorn these posters, it is not difficult to suspect who it is that is peppering Galas with these posters, directly or by proxy.

It is not certain what the BN hopes to achieve with such blatant attacks against the respected local figures, especially with the hands of their own leaders being not as clean as they might have liked when it comes to skeletons in the closet and botched development.

The ruling coalition or their 'supporters' may claim that this is in retaliation against the supposed 'attacks' against their candidate's humble educational background.

However, as one government observer remarked to Malaysiakini just after nomination day, it was Deputy Premier Muhyiddin Yassin himself who first highlighted the matter in his nomination speech, something even the observer himself thought of as a mistake.

"Why would you highlight your own weakness?," he asked in frustration.

Royal gamble

The issue was later picked up and defended by various BN leaders with no provocation from PAS. The Islamic party's leaders never harped on the issue, except in passing or while responding to questions from the press on the matter.

One wonders if BN's highlighting of this tid-bit is an attempt to set up PAS for attack or to hide more serious problems with their candidate.

All in all, BN would have done better if it had stuck to the issues of local problems and development concerns in Galas, which are very real issues that the PAS-led state

government are struggling with.

But posters are not the only proxy-attack launched by BN, as their online cyberwarriors and allied bloggers were the first to have drawn the royalty into the by-election tussle.

azlanFirst with an article claiming that Kelantan Sultan Sultan Muhammad V is scheduled to visit the by-election-hit Galas and later with an article accusing the sultan of being a lackey of the PAS-led state government.

The Kelantan palace has refuted rumours of a royal visit and the Umno-linked blogger has since apologised.

Once more it is unclear what the BN is hoping to achieve by playing up the royal issue, as it may very well blow up in their collective faces, in a state where the royal family still holds sway over public opinion.

One would do well to remember that the last time PAS swept Kelantan out of BN's hands nigh 20 years ago, rumour has it that it was "araha seri paduka baginda", or on the advice of the king to the rakyat.

Police 'pick and detain'

Police action has also marred campaigning in Galas as the police detained for questioning several members of two groups for allegedly campaigning in Galas, though both groups, students from Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Se-Malaysia (Gamis) and activists from Malaysians for Beng Hock carried no political literature and were not promoting party messages.

NONThe students were there to observe the by-election and interact with locals, while the activists were present to campaign for justice for death-in-custody victims.

Interestingly enough the police did nothing when a group calling itself the 1Malaysia NGO recruited people to march through the streets of Galas with loudhailers and chants of "Satu Malaysia", distributing goodie bags to the public.

NONThe group was also alleged to have paid RM100 to those who took part.

More interestingly, the group's coordinator, Sia Teck Keong, is Selangor MCA Youth deputy organising secretary and the party's Hulu Selangor division vice-chief. However, despite his political origins, he maintained that the 1Malaysia NGO is devoid of political funding or motivations.

The police apparently believed him over the students' and activists' claims in their calculations of which group to pick and detain.

Petrol blunder

But despite the 'long knives' that the BN is drawing in the days near to the endgame, the sly move to increase the pump price of RON 97 petrol as Malaysians slept last night may actually provide fuel for PAS to ignite a late campaign swing.

It is inconceivable for the petrol kiosk owners' association to have decided to increase the price on their own without at least consulting the government on such a strategic economic

item.

This may open BN to the long knives of PAS and an angry rakyat. That is unless a chickenpox-riddled Premier Najib Abdul Razak decides to recover at the last minute and play the hero to reverse the petrol price hike when he returns to office suddenly tomorrow 'shocked' by the news.

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