

**BN's 'mailed fist in velvet glove' could hand it victory**  
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ANALYSIS As the last day of campaigning looms, all signs point to a BN win in Galas as voter sentiment shows considerable support for the ruling coalition.

But any win by BN is expected to be only slight. BN sources speculate a maximum of 500 votes, depending on the voter turnout.

They say the 500 mark is tied to a 75 percent turnout while higher numbers will reduce the majority. If it reaches or surpasses 81 percent, a PAS victory is in sight.

NONEAware of this, the Islamic party has offered RM250 as 'transport fee' for outstation voters, looking to entice the 1,557 mostly Pakatan-friendly outstation voters, or 13 percent of the electorate, to join the locals on polling day.

BN's confidence is probably reflected in the absence of Premier Najib Razak from campaigning, with his deputy Muhyiddin Yassin only touching foot twice in Galas.

This stands in stark contrast to the fights it saw as tough, like Sibu and Hulu Selangor, where Najib and Muhyiddin went to the ground almost daily.

The signs of BN victory stems from the failure of PAS and its Pakatan allies to realise their formula for victory.

NONETheir initial strategy was to maintain Orang Asli support at 33 percent as in the last polls, while accepting a hit of as much as six percent in Malay votes akin to Manek Urai, where there was a reduction to 51 percent from 58 in the 2008 general election.

The opposition coalition has strategised to push Chinese votes to 60 percent from the previous 54, to absorb the lost Malay votes, and ensure a win, though by a slim margin.

The DAP is confident enough to guarantee the 60 percent Chinese votes for PAS.

Unexpected drop

However, an unexpected drop in Malay sentiment in excess of 10 percent and the perceived difficulty to maintain 33 percent for the Orang Asli votes has had alarm bells ringing for the Islamic party.

The 2,317 Chinese votes, at 60 or even 70 percent, can't make up for both reduced Orang Asli support and the dip in votes from the over 7,000 Malays.

NONEThe problem is Malay disgruntlement over the failure of the state government to address land, housing, clean water and agriculture problems.

BN wasted no time rubbing salt into these wounds, launching a banner war alleging that there's little to show for the 20 years PAS has ruled Kelantan.

Added to this is the steady stream of gifts like sundry goods, medical equipment, development promises and Agro Bank savings certificates heaped upon the Malay-majority

communities, keeping the loyal happy and swaying fence sitters.

The Orang Asli, especially in the remote areas, continue to be under the tight grip of BN with federal agencies babysitting the native communities who are lulled with the steady stream of election goodies.

Sword of Damocles

Several Orang Asli told Malaysiakini that BN has corralled them with mailed fist and velvet glove, keeping them happy with food and promises on one hand while holding the Damocles sword of reduced aid if any dare to support PAS.

In settlements nearer to towns, the Orang Asli are more receptive to PAS, especially with promises of gazetted native land.

But support is still slight as they are aware that they still have to depend on the federal government for development and aid.

The Orang Asli areas of Lojing, Sungai Ber, Belatim, Balar, Bihai and Hau, with a total of 1,889 voters, are visited by federal ministers bearing gifts almost daily.

To add to the discomfort of PAS, there are grumbles from the Chinese over the appointment of outsiders as community leaders in Pulai. There are also issues with state subsidies.

NONEAll these may complicate getting 60 percent or more of the Chinese vote.

However, as PAS and Pakatan have concentrated efforts on the Chinese in early campaigning, the dissatisfaction may have been minimised.

Still it was serious enough to warrant Penang CM Lim Guan Eng battling for at least 75 percent Chinese votes to go PAS in his speech last night.

Last minute

The drop in Malay and Orang Asli votes has PAS scrambling for Malay votes in a last-minute turnaround as campaign advisor Wan Abdul Rahim Wan Abdullah announced two days ago.

The party also undertaking a rushed foray into the Orang Asli settlement in Lojing on Monday announcing plans to gazette Orang Asli land to entice native support.

NONEIndeed PAS state election director Abdul Fatah Harun (left) said yesterday that the party's 'secret' weapon is the land offer, to seal Orang Asli votes in their favour.

PAS also lodged a complaint today with the Election Commission against plans to airlift four Orang Asli ballot boxes from Hau, Belatim, Bihai and Balarto to the main counting centre in Gua Musang civic hall, instead of counting on-site.

Abdul Fatah cited concerns of BN tampering, worried that inroads they may make with the Orang Asli will be nullified by BN sleight-of-hand.

All not lost for PAS

NONEAll is not lost for PAS however, if its transport fee gambit can assure high voter

turnout and they can make use of today's last-ditch campaigning to sway fence sitters.

A considerable number of voters that appear to support BN by attending functions and events, just show up for the goodies.

A concerted campaign or charm offensive by PAS may provide the impetus for a late-game victory.

But PAS needs more than the lacklustre defence-oriented campaign they are playing and start a hard-hitting scramble as well as import leaders to lead a charm offensive that their candidate lacks the charisma for.

NONThe presence of crowd favourite, Lembah Pantai parliamentarian Nurul Izzah Anwar (right) and charismatic Pakatan leaders like DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang may be the answer to their candidate's deficit in this aspect.

We have to still wait and see if PAS will throw hard-hitting campaigning into the mix, before the 11,553 voters go to the polls come Thursday, in the 13 polling districts.

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