

Gobala : give the opposition a chance
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BS Vanan

PKR's supreme council member N Gopalakrishnan today challenged the Malaysian voters to vote for the opposition for the better of the nation.
MCPX

"Don't get cheated by the Election Commission and the BN government," he told Malaysiakini in an interview yesterday.

"I want all Malaysians to go to the ballot boxes and vote for the opposition. I urge everyone to take up the challenge and vote for us," he said.

pas supporters club launch 160207 n gobalakrishnanThe 48-year-old Gopalakrishnan, well-known for his numerous police arrests and court appearances for participating in demonstrations, is contesting for the Padang Serai parliamentary seat in Kedah. He will be facing BN-MCA's Boey Chin Gan in the contest.

Gopalakrishnan is confident of doing well in wresting the seat from BN, and has offered to stand down in April to allow PKR's de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim to contest in the subsequent by-election. Anwar's ban on electoral politics ends in April.

"I will be very glad to resign and allow Anwar to contest here," said the father of three children. He is also PKR's national integration bureau chief.

Gopalakrishnan, who joined PKR from MIC in 1999, had previously contested for the Teluk Kemang parliamentary seat in 1999 but lost.

There are 59,218 voters in Padang Serai, with Malays making up of about 54 percent of the voters. Chinese voters stand at 22.6 percent and Indians at 22.3 percent.

In 2004, BN/MCA's Lim Bee Kau defeated PKR's Saifuddin Nasution Ismail by 10,316 votes.

Gopalakrishnan's confidence in winning the seat also stems from the lack of Boey's popularity among the local MCA members, who had hoped for a local candidate.

Below is an excerpt of the interview with Gopalakrishnan.

How is your election been so far?

gobalakrishna campaign 040308 talkingI am going on a direct contact basis. I am meeting as many people as possible and at night I am giving at least four ceramah. I am going around almost every part (of my constituency). This is my concept. The feedback that I get is very responsive. I have no need to advertise on the TV.

Is there a mood for a change among the voters?

I can say that the public wants a change. When we talk about lowering the price of petrol and also about the welfare state, I can see that the public responds positively. They are

very smart people and they are expecting a change. It is not only to deny the 2/3 majority but to form a better government. And they know, only when we form the government, we can fulfill the promises.

How do you describe your opponent?

There is nothing to talk about him. I don't know him (personally) as well. He is going around saying that I am not a local and thus won't be able to deliver a best service to the people here. I welcome this kind of attack. Even he is not a local, he is from Alor Setar.

He is the incumbent Kulim state representative and I can say that none of the Kulim MCA members are working with or for him here. And the minute he was announced as the candidate, the chairperson, division deputy of MCA Padang Serai and several member of Padang Serai have resigned.

I also got to know that he is depending on Gerakan, even to arrange a dinner for him. When his own team don't want him so how is he going to serve the public? I believe I am a better candidate.

Yes, I am from Ipoh but now I have moved here, with my family, to be part of the people.

BA emerged as an alternative coalition in 1999 election but until today we are still seeing individual-party campaigning style but not as a coalition concept, like BN.

It is because we didn't register the coalition. We only have it by name but I am very sure once the people accept us, then we can go ahead. Currently we have an effective inter-party working policy. So for the moment no problem.

Our main plan now is to get (PKR leader) Anwar Ibrahim into the mainstream politics and make him the next PM.

Will you let way for Anwar Ibrahim to be in mainstream politics by calling for a by-election, if you win this parliamentary seat?

gobalakrishna campaign 040308 anwarI will be very glad to resign and allow Anwar to contest here. I believe Padang Serai is a suitable place for him, with a majority of Malays and nearly equal number of Chinese and Indian voters. I think this seat will be very conducive for him.

Recently your son was detained by the police. Do you suspect any fault play?

Yes he was detained but they didn't manhandle him. The reason was the police wanted to disperse the crowd who protested against (MIC president) S Samy Vellu's arrival in Lunas. So when there were so many people, I requested my son to help to ease the situation but the police had a different agenda.

They arrested my son, and the Kedah police chief said he will only release my son if I ask the crowd to disperse. So I told him that he can keep my son even for 20 days, I am not going to ask the people to disperse.

It's not my fault if the people don't want Samy Vellu to be here (Lunas).

How do you view Malaysian elections?

In true sense, politics maneuver in Malaysia have been spoiled by BN by making full use of all government machinery when they are not even the real government. They are controlling all the media, they are limiting the opposition. I can say we are very long away from achieving a real matured political atmosphere in Malaysia.

Now we (PKR) are trying to change it. We have no other way to send the message. That is why we went to the streets with Bersih, demanding a free and fair election.

There have been various calls by the opposition to reform the election process. How do you think it is possible?

Just one way, change the government. There is no other way. You see, recently the BN government changed the constitution to allow the EC chairperson to serve another year. What is so great in that man? It is all a political move.

gobalakrishna campaign 040308 restaurantThey are trying to cheat the people. They are masterminding all the election (process). All the new steps introduced by EC were just cosmetic changes. We have hundreds of dead people in the voting list. I don't get the logic. When a person dies, his name is automatically removed from the national registration department's list. So why electoral list is left out?

They can introduce all the new things, transparent box, indelible ink and all, but that means they have planned something else.

Lastly, your message for the voters?

I want all Malaysians to go to the ballot boxes and vote for the opposition. Let us welcome Anwar as the next PM. Vote for us and we can use all the revenues to help the public. I urge everyone to take up the challenge and vote for us.

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