

Lembah Pantai: Mud-slinging in the rain
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On a huge stage in Jalan Telawi 3, Bangsar, such performers as Siti Nurhaliza and Erra Fazira kept some 500 people entertained. But it was not quite another mini-concert and another night in the trendy neighbourhood in Kuala Lumpur.
MCPX

najib shahrizat lembah pantai 070308 najibDespite heavy rain, people stayed glued to their seats as more celebrities arrived - this time of the political variety, in the form of incumbent Barisan Nasional (BN) parliamentarian Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and later, BN deputy head Najib Abdul Razak.

Children, young professionals and elderly people stretched out to shake Shahrizat's hand, as she waved to them.

Said one supporter: "She is like a mother, a sister and a good friend to people in Bangsar."

Shahrizat, 55, has previously beaten off two high-profile contenders for the Lembah Pantai seat - former lord president Salleh Abas for Semangat 46 in 1995 and lawyer Zainur Zakaria who contested for PKR in 2004.

lembah pantai nomination day 240208 handsShe is now defending the seat against newcomer - but no stranger to the electorate - Nurul Izzah, the eldest daughter of PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim. Also in the running is Independent N Periasamy.

Shahrizat, who had earlier claimed she would not indulge in personal attacks in her campaign, seemed to against her word last night.

Obviously referring to her debutant opponent, Nurul Izzah, she said that taking on Lembah Pantai will not be 'child's play' for those aspiring to Parliament, because there are 200,000 people to serve with different lifestyles and ideologies.

Playing on latent fears of religious fundamentalism, she also warned Bangsar residents of the risk of bringing an opposition party to power.

"By voting in the opposition, you will bring the biggest opposition component party, PAS, one step closer to Bangsar. We are not like America where you can vote for a Democrat or a Republican, but still maintain your lifestyle and ideology.

"Do you want PAS to come here and make serious change?" she asked, to loud cries of 'No' from the crowd.

Shahrizat's biggest challenge over the last two terms has been to ensure "balanced development" in the constituency, which ranges from luxury bungalows in Bukit Bandaraya to zinc-roof shacks in Kampung Kerinchi.

In Bangsar, a survey has shown that safety is at the top of the residents' list, so she duly vowed to bring down the rate to "zero".

"The first thing I will do when I get re-elected is to knock on the Inspector-General of Police's door to make sure that there is a proper police station in Lembah Pantai." she said.

(There is already a beat-base in the Telawi commercial hub and in Jalan Pantai Baru.)

Another attack on Anwar

Najib, in an orange batik shirt, arrived with his wife, daughter and national cosmonaut Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor, a clear favourite with women in the crowd.

najib shahrizat lembah pantai 070308 speech "Bangsar has always been my favorite place. If you don't believe me, ask my wife, if you don't believe my wife, ask my daughter," quipped Najib at the start of his speech.

Saying that he regards Bangsar as the model of modern Malaysia, where dynamic Malaysians live in one place, he too told voters to give the opposition a miss.

Launching another scathing attack against Anwar, he said PKR can promise "heaven on earth", but that it takes courage to tell people the truth (in reference to oil prices).

"Any fool can say that he can reduce the price of oil by getting Petronas to subsidise it, but the people should question whether it's the right thing to do," said Najib, who himself is defending the Pekan parliamentary seat in Pahang.

He also condemned Anwar, who was finance minister during the Asian financial crisis in 1997, for having listened to solutions offered by the International Monetary Fund.

"He doesn't care if the economy is going down, he only wants to become the prime minister," he claimed.

He also pointed out that Anwar's allies are "leaving him one by one" and showing him up, referring to recent comments by PKR former vice-president Chandra Muzaffar and party member S Nallakaruppan.

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