

**BN tactics all wrong in Kelantan**  
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It was well past midnight but scenes on the streets of Kota Bharu seem as though the city was under siege. Mat rempit gangs zip past performing one-wheeled stunts while waving PAS flags. MCPX

On the other side of the street, flash cars bearing Kuala Lumpur-registered plates roar by with BN-colours. Amidst this action, police cars with flashing blue lights patrol the street.

"Everything happens at night. In the day time, it is peaceful again," said one resident.

kelantan 070308 street 02Sure enough, come daylight, the motor nuisances stop but Kota Bharu is virtually layered over with flags, leaflets and flyers. Full-sized BN flags line some streets the way small pennants do in other parts of the country.

PAS spiritual leader Nik Aziz's face beams at motorists at every junction and occasionally, there are big buntings of him with his head bowed in prayer.

In essence the fight in Kelantan is no fight at all. BN may be trying hard but it seems that all the tactics are the wrong ones.

Development may be still be scarce and jobs harder to come by but it is the humble, devout, clean image of PAS and its leaders that makes voters here return them to power election after election.

Yet on the ground, it seems as though BN has not understood this or it considers otherwise.

### **Splashing the cash**

"There is so much money politics going on here," said a lecturer when interviewed.

"Meetings are called in the smaller areas outside of town and people are given handouts. These fellows go and take it but they will come back and vote PAS," he said.

A similar experience is related by a Kelantanese Chinese professional who has returned to Kota Bharu to cast his vote.

kelantan 070308 street 01Teng, a 30-year-old executive who works in Kuala Lumpur said he has flown back to vote opposition for the past two general elections.

"We can claim our travel expenses back from BN if we want to," he added.

The problem with these incentives, said the lecturer, is that it reinforces the perceptions that the voters have of the respective parties. Furthermore, the handouts may come, he said, but there is no guarantee that the vote will follow.

Sudhir, a journalist from Singapore, said he witnessed scenes of tension between PAS and BN supporters over these allegations of corruption at the Pengkalan Pasir by-election in

December 2005.

"The PAS supporters would taunt the BN supporters by making signs with their hands indicating a payout. Some of them came to scuffles over this," he related.

Back in Kota Bharu to cover the general election, the journalist said juxtaposition between the two main rival parties is evident once again.

"What we see now is PAS supporters going around in small motorbikes and the BN supporters driving up from the city in their big cars. Maybe (BN) thinks that by doing this, it would make people here want to have development so that they can have these cars too," he added.

### **Non-muslims happy**

Downtown in Kota Bharu, the signs are not encouraging for BN if it is banking on Kelantan's non-muslim minority to help it win the state over.

Liew, a shopkeeper in the town's Chinese area pulled out a green badge from his pocket and shouted "Vote PAS!" when asked of his allegiance.

On living in an Islamic state, Liew insists that the non-Muslims are treated "very well".

kelantan 070308 mosque" Just think about it. Right behind this street, there is a religious centre but the state government let us keep our pork market right there. In fact, they made it nicer. We have no problems at all," he insisted.

In fact, Liew was indignant at the rumours of phantom voter movement that is circulating furiously in these parts.

"Here take these two numbers and check when you go back. It is the same person," he said referring to two identification numbers that he received through opposition sms distribution network.

If the sentiment here in Kota Bharu is indicative of the mood in the state then PAS has not a lot to fear.

The various campaigning activities of rival BN may even push voters towards PAS as the aggressiveness of the Pemuda BN's "Pade Doh" campaign feels out of jive with the mood in this peaceful laid back town.

By lessening their nationwide Islamic state rhetoric this general election, PAS may even be able to boost support for its Barisan Alternatif alliance partners.

That is, of course, if the allegations of vote-buying and phantom voting stay just allegations and not become real problems in the electoral process.