

Arif Shah clarifies 'paid spy' issue
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The Barisan Nasional candidate for Permatang Pauh confirmed that they have "intelligence" units just like other parties.
MCPX

But the Seberang Jaya denied that the "spy" units are used to bring down the opposition. Rather, they are to gauge local sentiments.

"That's why I love the press. Sometimes when I say something it will be quoted in the right way. Sometimes it will be misquoted. Other times, they write with their own interpretation.

arif shah bn candidate permatang pauh by election walkabout 210808 05"As far as this campaign is concerned, it is not run by me. I'm just a candidate. When you talk about 'perisikan' (spying), it is in all the parties, whether it's PKR or Umno or Barisan Nasiona.

"We all have a perisikan team."

The "spies", he explained, were not about getting information about the opposition but input from the people.

"It is to find out about their grievances and why they support or reject us," said Arif Shah at his house this morning.

"When I go to different villages, I'm briefed ahead of their problems and I can address them there.

"As long as there is no money politics and other things, it should be okay," said Arif Shah.

The father of five was reported in newspapers as having paid local villagers to gather information. Though, this should not be equated with vote-buying, he said.

"I'm not in direct control of the machinery and sometimes when I find flyers here which I don't agree with I've them taken away," said Arif Shah.

Part Chinese, Indian and Malay

On the question of whether his Mandarin-speaking skills were not helping attract Chinese votes, Arif Shah said being multi-lingual was not the key to his victory.

"I've schooled from Primary One until Form Five in Chinese schools," said Arif Shah.

arif shah bn candidate permatang pauh by election walkabout 210808 03"When I went to the Chinese school, I managed to get half of the Chinese heart and soul into me. Hence, I'm half Chinese and half Malay.

By studying in Chinese schools, he explained, he understood their problems better than many.

"It's not the language as anyone can be multi-lingual. But I understand their requests more than many people and the nerve towards other races.

"Indian, because I've some mamak blood and hence I'm sensitive to their problems too. And of course Malay is my mother tongue," he added.

"That's why I don't subscribe to racial politics and I've been very consistent from school days till now. When there are any problems I'll work hard to find a solution."

When asked if people's sentiments have changed since March 8, the 51-year-old felt that it has.

"Permatang Pauh has been under opposition for 10 years now and many requests were not done. But when the leadership announced my candidacy, there was a feeling of happiness among the voters.

"Unlike the last general election, voters shrunk away everywhere I went. This time round, they don't run away anymore," said Arif Shah.

People, he added, were more interested in a local representative who will look into their problems rather than one who intends to perform on a national platform.

Ku Li gives support

Meanwhile, Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah dropped by Arif Shah's office to lend his support.

permatang pauh 230808 razaleigh meet arifBut the Umno stalwart was unsure if he would be asked to help campaign for his comrade.

When asked if the petrol price drop by the government yesterday was geared towards this by-election, Tengku Razaleigh said there was nothing wrong with it.

"This only goes to show that the government is genuine in helping the people. If they can already lower it now, why should they wait for Sept 1?" said Tengku Razaleigh.

On whether Anwar will form the next government on Sept 16, the Umno president hopeful said that it did not look possible.

"I don't think that will happen. Why would people want to hop parties when they've been elected for their stand and struggles?"

"It's also not known if the other coalition partners of Pakatan Rakyat would agree to other parties jumping onto their bandwagon," said Ku Li.

"The recent PAS muktamar already shows that there is some disagreement with the appointment of Anwar as the prime minister if they become government."