

MCA hypocrisy over hudud in KT campaign
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Comment

If the definition of an 'election' is reduced to statistical terms, it would reflect 10 percent of what is happening to voters and 90 percent of how voters respond to this.

Most political observers are uncertain about how many of the 80,229 Kuala Terengganu voters will turn out on Saturday - hence, the current uncertainty about the likely outcome.

The by-election itself was unexpected, being called after the sudden death of Umno parliamentarian Razali Ismail less than a year after being elected in the general election on March 8 last year.

kuala terengganu wan ahmad farid mohd abdul wahid endut azharudin mamat Many agree that the destiny of the ruling coalition far outweighs the fate of BN-Umno candidate Wan Ahmad Farid Wan Salleh in the three-cornered fight against Mohd Abdul Wahid Endut of PAS and Azharuddin Mamat @ Adam, an Independent.

The unfolding of issues during the 10-day campaign has given rise to various interpretations and hypothesis among political analysts. They seem to agree that surfing the wave of emotion is the most popular way to go - it is a common feature in both the BN and Pakatan Rakyat campaigns.

Certainly, it is of no surprise that the hudud issue has bubbled up to the surface again. Pakatan leaders have interpreted this as another habitual BN tactic to instil fear among Chinese voters and to get them to throw their support behind Wan Ahmad Farid.

The MCA had tried - without effect and to its great detriment - to play up the issue during the general election to pull in Chinese votes. Yet, this does not appear to have deterred the BN component party from launching another attempt in Kuala Terengganu as part of the political mind games.

selangor mca dinner 211108 wong foon meng 2MCA secretary Wong Foon Meng acknowledged that it is an old topic, but said it is only "one of the issues" being relayed to the Chinese community.

"We tell (them) about the implications of PAS introducing this law," he told Malaysiakini.

"We also inform them that Pakatan cannot come to a consensus in collective decision-making on hudud. The PKR adviser Anwar (Ibrahim) openly supports it, but DAP is generally keeping quiet (except for national chairperson Karpal Singh and veteran leader Lim Kit Siang).

"I know this is an old issue but we (MCA) must still remind the Chinese community and tell them that DAP should boycott the by-election by not helping the PAS candidate."

Yet, the same MCA barely whimpered in protest when former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad

declared in September 2001 that “Malaysia is already an Islamic state”.

mahathir global perdana war crimes forum 050207 ling liong sik
The current leaders would do well to remember former MCA president Dr Ling Liong Sik’s response: “We want to ask ourselves....can we call a country by two or three different names, an Islamic state, a secular state?”

“My simplistic thinking...if we look at a rose, being English-educated, I’d call it a rose. But (the) Chinese-educated call it mei-gui (in Mandarin), a Malay friend calls it bunga mawar and (it is) roja in Tamil. Yet, it is ... a rose. So can we call Malaysia, an Islamic state, a secular state and so on and so forth?”

“Similarly, an apple is round, has seeds, is crunchy (and) has a stalk, but some people call it ‘apple’, some call it ping gor...the fruit can be described in many, many ways.”

It was Ling’s way of rationalising that, whatever name Mahathir had chosen to describe the country, the federal constitution has not changed.

Change of strategy

Much has been made of the recent debate between PAS vice-president Husam Musa and Umno Youth deputy head Khairy Jamaluddin, during which the hudud issue was reheated.

Husam had reiterated his party’s commitment to implementing the Islamic criminal code should it assume power at federal level. This drew out old arguments, including within Pakatan.

MCA Youth chief Wee Ka Siong said he believes that Husam’s remarks will have a negative impact on Chinese voters in Kuala Terengganu. He also pointed out that voters know the difference between Umno and PAS rule.

china town in kuala terengganu
When PAS ruled Terengganu, “there was no allocation for building Chinese temples. Some PAS leaders were also unhappy about the funding provided for a beautification project in Kampung Cina,” he claimed.

In recent days, though, MCA has realised that harping on hudud is not paying off. So, it has shifted emphasis to the importance of the Chinese community maintaining a good relationship with its benefactor, the Umno-controlled state leadership.

Wong pointed out that leaders in the state government have, all along, taken good care of the Chinese community and that this goodwill must be maintained.

“The Terengganu government has allocated a big amount of money (for development) compared to other states,” he said.

Wee claimed that voters in Kuala Terengganu will enjoy “more benefits” under a BN

administration.

Reminder to voters

The Pakatan campaign, meanwhile, is playing up national issues to whip up a reminder to voters that leadership change must continue at every level.

“Malaysian voters are no longer easily seduced by BN’s political rhetoric on development of infrastructure. They (voters) are better educated and there is continuing inquiry over the competence of BN governance,” said an opposition leader who declined to be named.

“And the evidence of this incompetence is not pretty. More and more Malaysians have been awakened to critical issues ranging from infringement of human rights to the need to uphold integrity, accountability and transparency in governance.”

scsh uuca talk 141205 liew chin tongAnother leader, DAP’s Liew Chin Tong, narrated his feedback from his campaign rounds in Kuala Terengganu.

“I can see and sense this strong frustration among Chinese voters against the BN government, and a strong sentiment for change,” he said.

“They reacted enthusiastically to talks by (blogger) Raja Petra (Kamarudin) at our ceramah. Perhaps this is clear response to arrests under the ISA after Sept 16, and unhappiness that the winds of change (pledged by Pakatan) have been delayed (by BN’s counter-tactics),” he said.

Deputy premier Najib Abdul Razak, who is spearheading the campaign, has reportedly said that the announcements on millions of ringgit in aid and projects are not an attempt to buy votes.

The BN’s old-fashioned approach to campaigning - by pushing the policy of developmentalism - has remained unchanged despite internal calls for reform.

Will Kuala Terengganu voters, especially the Chinese community, continue to support a BN candidate when the coalition seems bent on winning at any cost, rather than winning public trust and respect?

Will voters opt for short-term gains at the expense of building a two-party system at national level?

Will the by-election results become another tipping point, endorsing Pakatan’s determination to push the “rakyat’s agenda” for change?

The nation awaits the verdict.