

**The final lap of Batu Sapi and Galas by-election**  
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OPINION The Batu Sapi parliamentary by-election in Sabah and the Galas state by-election in Kelantan have entered the final lap and the campaigning is set to heat up in the final two days before polling starts on Thursday 4 November 2010.

Some people are obviously getting tired of by-elections as there have been 11 by-elections since the March 2008 general election. But to the BN and the Pakatan Rakyat, the two current by-elections are significant and they cannot afford a defeat.

Hence, all sorts of gimmicks are being used during the campaign period, including an offer to pay the transportation cost for outstation voters.

Many unexpected things also happened, such as Ansari Abdullah, the PKR candidate for Batu Sapi, falling into the sea twice, and the arrest of four persons demonstrating in Galas to seek justice for the late Teoh Beng Hock. The four, including Beng Hock's sister, were arrested for distributing pamphlets deemed to be wrongful under Section 4 (a) of the Elections Offences Act 1954.

When PKR adviser Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim showed up to speak at a ceramah in Batu Sapi, he received only a flat response from the local people. However, there was overwhelming response when veteran DAP leader Lim Kit Siang campaigned for Ansari, showing that Lim still has the confidence and support of the Chinese community.

Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee will obviously suffer a big blow if Lim attracts more Chinese voters to Ansari's side.

The BN will definitely gain much and may even win the by-election as a result of the split in the Chinese votes.

Both the Pakatan Rakyat and the SAPP will end up killing each other if the 37% Chinese voters in the constituency is split. Even with the current trend to vote for alternative parties, not more than 80% of Chinese voters will vote for the alternative parties. As a result, both of them will lose.

The BN is having a strong advantage in the Bumiputera community. With its efforts to consolidate its foundation, it will benefit from the fight between the Pakatan Rakyat and the SAPP if they do not seek for a strategic breakthrough.

The Batu Sapi by-election is the first test for the SAPP after it left the BN. If it loses, it is going to be a big blow to the party and its president. Similarly, it is the first election in Sabah for Pakatan Rakyat since its formation. Sabah plays a major role in the Pakatan Rakyat objective to take over the federal government after the next general election, and Batu Sapi is seen as the launching pad for the Battle for Putrajaya.

Hence, the Batu Sapi by-election is a platform for the Pakatan Rakyat to convey its political ideas and the two-party system to the Sabah people. The problem is that the Pakatan Rakyat does not have enough finances and resources and, hence, is unable to reach the remote Bumiputera communities.

The SAPP, meanwhile, also does not have the machinery to give the Sabah BN a viable challenge. The political scenario in Sabah can only be changed if the alternative parties team up and combine their resources. Unfortunately, the personal political ambitions of their leaders have overwhelmed their senses.

In Galas, it is certainly a fierce battle between Umno and PAS. No one takes it as a friendly match and it is certainly not a friendly match.

Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah or Ku Li wants Galas to be a friendly match, hence his campaign style has been less aggressive. Apparently, Ku Li is becoming a political lame-duck, and even if BN wins Galas, he is not expected to get any important role in Umno. His political candle is flicking and burning out.

The Galas by-election seems to be a deadlock affair. PAS gained 54% of Chinese votes in the 2008 general election, and even it can get more Chinese votes this time, it will be offset by the Malay votes that have returned to Umno. Hence, the 1,889 Orang Asli (16.37%) will be crucial.

Umno and PAS are going all out to lure the Orang Asli votes with all sorts of gimmicks, and it seems that PAS is having an upper hand.

PAS is the most formidable enemy of Umno, and Umno cannot underestimate the power of PAS, especially in Kelantan, where PAS controls the state government and holds reign and sway over the hearts and minds of many people there.

The two by-elections have revealed the inadequacies of the ruling and alternative parties. They have resorted to every conceivable means to get votes and it seems like not much progress has been made by the country so far. - mysinchew.com

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