

Haram 'decree' boils over

Muhyiddin chastised for his remark against Pakatan candidate

JOHOR BARU: After a lukewarm first week, the mercury in the Pulau by-election shot up almost overnight thanks to Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin who declared that it was "haram" or forbidden in Islam to vote for Pakatan Harapan.

His use of the term, which has always been politically sensitive, on Saturday night was slammed the very next day by leaders from Pakatan and Barisan Nasional, its ally in the unity government pact.

Muhyiddin, who is Perikatan Nasional chairman, had made the call while campaigning to voters in Taman Kempas, a largely middle-class Malay neighbourhood next to Johor Baru city.

Perikatan's Zulkifli Jaafar is taking on Pakatan's Suhaizan Kaiat for control of the urban parliamentary seat where 44.18% of its 166,653 registered voters are Malay Muslims.

"Do not give even one vote to Suhaizan, the former (Johor) speaker. I deem it as haram.

"Tomorrow someone will challenge me which fatwa this was based on," the former prime minister said, seemingly in jest.

Muhyiddin then claimed that Malays would lose political power

if Pakatan and the unity government pact is able to keep their two-thirds majority in Parliament by winning Pulau in the Sept 9 polls.

"Having a two-thirds majority will make it easy for them to make constitutional amendments, including the redelineation of electoral boundaries which is done every eight years.

"How do you think they will do this? They will surely increase the current 222-seat Parliament by another 78 seats to 300. Where would they want these increases? Maybe in urban and densely populated areas.

"This is not a racial issue but the reality of the geopolitics here and in other areas.

"Gerrymandering will happen where they break up the constituency that does not support them and add seats in areas that support them.

"The urban areas are populated by the Chinese. A large chunk of those areas do not support us but I do not want to blame them," he said, adding that this would then give more power to parties such as DAP, come the 16th or 17th general election.

Pakatan needs to retain Pulau to



Public address: Muhyiddin speaking during a ceramah in Taman Kempas, Johor Baru.

maintain its two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat, which it said is crucial for institutional reforms to stamp out corruption and improve good governance.

Pakatan and Barisan leaders slammed Muhyiddin for using such a religiously sensitive term.

"Someone who is not an ulama has issued a political fatwa, claiming that voting for the unity government's candidate, Suhaizan, is haram," said Deputy Prime Minister and Barisan chairman Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

"I want to ask that person, which Quranic verse and hadith he uses? When he was part of the Pakatan Harapan 1.0 government, everything was halal (permitted in Islam) to him," he said after visiting a flat in Kempas Permai yesterday.

"But when they are no longer

aligned, then he issues a fatwa," said Ahmad Zahid, referring to the time when Muhyiddin's party Bersatu was part of Pakatan.

In Kuala Lumpur, Pakatan leader Fahmi Fadzil refuted claims that the unity government pact will increase Dewan Rakyat seats to 300 from 222,

"As a Cabinet minister, this is the first time I'm hearing such figures. I'm not sure where he got this information from," said Fahmi, who is also Communications and Digital Minister.

"If a minister hasn't received such information, then to me, this is his imagination in an attempt to scare the public in the Pulau by-election," the Pakatan communications director added.

It was previously reported that the Election Commission is due to conduct a redelineation exercise in Sarawak in 2023, Sabah in

2025, while 2026 has been set for states in the peninsula.

The by-election for the Pulau parliamentary seat and Simpang Jeram state seats are being held following the passing of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Minister Datuk Seri Salahuddin Ayub, who was the MP and assemblyman for the seats respectively.

Pulau is a mixed seat with Malays making up 44.18% of the total 166,653 registered voters, followed by the Chinese (40.46%), Indians (12.31%) and other ethnicities (3.06%).

In the 15th General Election in November last year, Salahuddin had defended the seat by winning 64,900 votes, which gave him a 33,174 majority against Barisan-Umno's Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed (31,726 votes) and Loh Kah Yong from Perikatan-Gerakan (20,677 votes).