

PAS rallies urban Malays against BN under Barang Naik campaign
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 20 — In branding an anti-price hike campaign Protes BN, PAS aims to win over urban Malay voters feeling the pinch of inflation and bleed the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government of Bumiputera support in the coming polls.

PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu launched the campaign today in Kampung Baru, the urban Malay heartland in the shadow of the iconic Petronas Twin Towers, by distributing several flyers depicting the BN's lavish lifestyle at the cost of public money.

One of them showed a caricature of a man, supposed to be Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib, tipping over with his little finger a domino block marked as "petrol" on the side to touch the next block marked "sugar" and with a number of other blocks in a close arrangement.

Another carried a picture of the prime minister's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor's head next to a cut diamond and the headline "Bini Najib (BN): Ro\$mah yang Membazir".

Both flyers were printed with the Protes BN [this time standing for Barang Naik] logo and the slogan: "Change Now, Save Malaysia".

A Protes BN flyer depicting a caricature of the prime minister as saying 'A little raise and a huge outcry'.

Mohamad, popularly called Mat Sabu, explained that the campaign was to create awareness among the urban Malay Bumiputera community of the tie between government policies and the impact on their daily lives.

"The Malays, they are not sensitive to what goes on daily, for example, bribery, misappropriation [of money]... they grumble but not to the extent of protesting," he said in a speech.

He compared the Malays to the ethnic Chinese whom he said "knew the value of money, the value of price", as he related how Pakatan Rakyat (PR) ally DAP allegedly beat former MCA president Tan Koon Swan at the height of the latter's might in a 1986 contest.

But according to records, Tan had won the Gopeng parliamentary seat with a majority of 6,135 votes in the August 4 general election of that year.

He quit his post after being sentenced to jail for abetting in a criminal breach of trust involving Pan-Electric Industries, a Singapore-based conglomerate with a market capitalisation worth S\$230 million, that collapsed in 1985 and forced both the Singapore and Malaysian stock exchanges to shut down for three days.

Mohamad said the awareness campaign was necessary because Malays are not "sensitive" and do not feel the loss of their consumer rights or their money as acutely as the ethnic Chinese.

Pokok Sena MP Datuk Mahfuz Omar, who helms the Islamist party's consumer affairs bureau, was also present and said the campaign was also taking place on Facebook.

Mahfuz said the party aims to enlist 5,000 members through Facebook in the next 10 days

before the Aidilfitri celebration.

There were 154 likes on the Protes BN page at the time this article was written.

Just yesterday, Najib said that a system based fully on meritocracy would lead to inequality.

He also said focusing entirely on meritocracy would not be fair to those living in rural and suburban areas, claiming they would not be able to compete on a level playing field with their urban counterparts.

Today, the sentiment was echoed by his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin who reassured unhappy Malays that safeguarding Bumiputera interests was still Putrajaya's main agenda.

Najib's and Muhyiddin's remarks come ahead of a general election that is expected to be held within a year.

Critics have accused Najib of diluting his New Economic Model (NEM) by creating agencies like the Bumiputera Agenda Driving Unit (Teraju) and failing to focus on needs and merit-based affirmative action policies.

But government officials said the move was necessary as Bumiputera equity in the economy remained low, despite the billions doled out since the New Economic Policy (NEP) began in 1971.

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