

PKR blusters but offers little to Johor
The Malaysian Insider
November 27, 2011
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JOHOR BARU, Nov 27 — PKR's national congress saw plenty of Umno-bashing in the latter's bastion and birthplace, but the opposition party offered few clues as to what a PKR-led Johor government would offer.

While policy speeches proposed several national level programmes that build on Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) Buku Jingga and alternative budget platforms, PKR did not outline what Johoreans can gain from voting the coalition into power.

Top leaders in the party dodged the question of their choice for mentri besar candidate, with Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim the latest to offer a "we'll work together to win the state" answer.

Political analysts told The Malaysian Insider that PKR's push to seize the state lacks credibility and a semblance of a "governance formula."

"What Johoreans would like to know is what PR will do differently.

"Minimum wage and Felda are great in terms of building on national policies but how about something like Iskandar?" consultant Ong Kian Ming said, referring to the RM78 billion economic development project that has failed to impress five years since its launch.

The congress, likely the last before an election expected early next year, was more noteworthy for full-blooded attacks on Umno — the highlight being Youth chief Shamsul Iskandar Amin's challenge to Umno to amend the constitutional to guarantee a Malay prime minister.

Deputy president Azmin Ali had also stressed that "Keadilan is ready to lead Malaysia" without what he called a morally-bankrupt Umno.

Meanwhile, Wanita chief Zuraida Kamaruddin repeated calls for her Umno counterpart Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil to step down over the RM250 million National Feedlot Centre (NFC) scandal.

At least 70 per cent of Wanita delegates also highlighted alleged abuse in the public-funded cattle farming project.

"It's disappointing to see that the campaign is still at the level of being anti-Barisan Nasional (BN). PR isn't going to turn protest voters into supporters this way.

"It needs a governance formula and solutions, not just different handouts," said analyst Khoo Kay Peng.

At the very least, Ong added, "PR needs to have more quality candidates who have a national standing so voters in Johor can take you seriously."

Local leaders from all three PR components have told The Malaysian Insider that there is

currently no strong Malay leader in Johor where the pact won just one federal out of 26 and six state seats from 56 on offer in Election 2008.

"We have no one since Abdul Razak Ahmad," said a PKR division chief, referring to the late state chairman who died in 2007.

Anwar will have a chance to outline a clear plan when the PKR de facto leader addresses delegates before the close of the congress tomorrow.

But given he has already passed up the opportunity in several ceramahs so far this weekend, this may be a question that continues to linger.

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