

After Bersih, Pakatan to launch pre-polls Hari Raya blitz
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 29 — When thousands of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) party members head home for the Hari Raya holidays next month, they will each be armed with specially-packed information kits and strict instructions from the opposition's strategists.

Their mission: To launch a pre-election blitzkrieg for PR and keep the Bersih torch burning.

Their target: The Malay heartlands outside the capital.



Azmin said 'Ramadan is not an excuse for us to sit back and relax'. — File pictures

The federal opposition hopes to get first dibs on campaigning for the Malay vote ahead of a general election expected soon and will trumpet PR's reform agenda in areas they believe have limited access to information.

They will make full use of the Hari Raya holidays to do this and beginning from the month of Ramadan, PR members and supporters across the country will participate in "balik kampung" programmes aimed at spreading the "PR word".

"Ramadan is not an excuse for us to sit back and relax. It is an important month for Muslims and Malays in Malaysia but besides our usual rituals and prayers, we must use the opportunity for our leaders and members to go back to their kampungs and bring with them these issues, these leaflets, to spread the PR word," PKR deputy president Azmin Ali told *The Malaysian Insider*.

The Gombak MP said PKR has already prepared special information kits for the blitzkrieg, with each one explaining the chaos that erupted in the capital during Bersih's July 9 rally and highlighting PR's reform promises from its Buku Jingga.

"We also called our 'Demi Rakyat' programme directors from each party division to the headquarters last week and we gave them all these information kits and the details and our secretary-general has explained to them what to do," he said.

PAS's Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said his party plans to conduct an international forum featuring representatives from electoral reform groups abroad and former politicians or civil society members from countries like Germany, the UK, Indonesia or the US.

"We will also continue to engage with the Election Commission (EC) as well as with the diplomatic corps, by updating them on the state of democracy in Malaysia and press on with our current roadshow with ceramahs explaining the Bersih issue," he said.



Pua said the DAP's efforts to keep the Bersih flag flying would be intensified during Ramadan.

DAP national publicity secretary Tony Pua said the party's efforts to keep the Bersih flag flying would be intensified through more political ceramah-cum-dinner functions and community programmes with Muslim voters during Ramadan.

"We will dialogue and engage with the Muslim community and through this, the messages are passed down. We must keep the conversation going because, generally, people forget issues after three months," he said.

But Bersih 2.0 and its clarion call for electoral changes will not be the only central issue that PR wants to spread to rural Malaysia this Hari Raya.

Dzulkefly, the MP for Kuala Selangor, said Bersih's demands may pack little punch among this group, particularly the Malays, as among others, the issue was mostly Klang Valley-centric.

"We must diversify, move away from harping only on the issue of Bersih. The onslaught at the end must be a multi-pronged one. Bersih is important but sometimes to the Malay constituents, this one doesn't really bite," he said.

Instead, PR leaders will lend special focus to bread-and-butter issues, recognising that for many constituents the surge in living costs will turn this year's Hari Raya into a lean one.

With the country's record-high inflation rate, driven by rising food and transport prices, many families will likely be forced to slash certain luxuries from their usual celebration menus this year as they struggle to stretch their ringgit.

With this in mind, said Dzulkefly, economic issues will be the main dish PR will serve this Hari Raya.



Dzulkefly said economic issues would be the main dish PR will serve this Hari Raya.

"Issues on living costs, engaging them on the economy, inflation, subsidies, what not... the practical things. During the Ramadan stretch, we will engage them with more service-type activities but at the same time campaign on how badly the government has mismanaged the economy, income disparities and, of course, the usual endemic of corruption," he said.

Dzulkefly, however, would not delve deeper into PAS's plans for Hari Raya but said that like PKR, it would involve the distribution of information materials like flyers and CDs in the villages and other "very specific" programmes for the entire Ramadan month.

Unlike Dzulkefly, Azmin said the Bersih issue was still a crucial one and must be explained in detail to those living outside the Klang Valley.

"But we have been harping on the rally itself and there is a disconnect between the PR leadership and the people in terms of explaining what Bersih's demands are," he said.

Azmin blamed the "disconnect" on Barisan Nasional (BN), complaining that the ruling pact has been bent on attacking Bersih organisers in order to shift focus from the coalition's fight for electoral reforms.

"They have attacked along racial lines but this initiative does not involve (Bersih chairman Datuk) Ambiga (Sreenevasan) alone. It is collective. Look at Pak Samad Said (national laureate Datuk A. Samad Said). We must tell voters — look, we have Ambiga, we have Samad Said... Bersih transcends racial boundaries," he said.

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