

**BN threatening public with Merdeka theme, says Pakatan
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By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, June 26 — The federal opposition has accused the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) of threatening the public with the “Janji Ditepati” (Promises Fulfilled) theme for this year’s Merdeka celebrations.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers told The Malaysian Insider the theme ran contrary to the ideas of freedom associated with independence and condemned Datuk Seri Najib Razak for using a national holiday and state apparatus for “narrow political propaganda.”

“He doesn’t care anymore,” Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said, referring to the prime minister.

The PKR de facto leader added that “instead of a message of freedom that can be embraced by everyone” the ruling coalition chose a theme that “runs contrary to independence and instead threatens and fragments Malaysians.”

DAP vice-chairman Tan Kok Wai also said the “anyone can tell it is an election slogan” that “fails to inspire people to unite”.

“It should transcend party politics instead of being a BN slogan that tries to snare you in a net,” the Cheras MP said.

Tan said the theme was ‘an election slogan’ that ‘fails to inspire people to unite’. The government had announced yesterday the theme for Malaysia Day and National Day celebrations, which fall on September 16 and August 31 respectively, with the latter seeing Najib address the country in a night event at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

The Umno president has been campaigning across the country on a tour dubbed “Jelajah Janti Ditepati” over the past month in which he has accused the opposition of being an unreliable government which does not fulfil its promises.

The strategy appears to be geared towards winning approval for the BN coalition which lags far behind the prime minister’s own popularity.

The Pekan MP received a 65 per cent approval rating in a Merdeka Center poll last month but his government only gained a 48 per cent approval in the survey done after the Bersih rally on April 28.

PAS vice-president Datuk Mahfuz Omar pointed out that with this announcement, “it is certain elections won’t be before September 16.”

“This propaganda was started by the new Chief Secretary, who told civil servants not to believe the opposition’s empty promises,” he said, referring to Datuk Seri Ali Hamsa’s statement on Sunday to the 1.4-million-strong public service.

“Merdeka should be about the freedom of the mind, and freedom from fear of change. Instead, the government is saying, if you change you will lose this and that,” the Pokok Sena MP said.

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