

On N-Day, PKR heads to Malay heartland
Malaysian Insider
August 31, 2012
By Hafidz Baharom

PETALING JAYA, Aug 31 — PKR kicked off today its “Jelajah Merdeka Rakyat” nationwide tour to win over the crucial Malay vote ahead of key national polls in a US-style political campaign with its top leaders going on the road in a double-decker bus.

For its first leg, the urban-based multiracial opposition party is heading into rural Malay heartland in four states that have long been regarded as the fortresses of its political foe Umno, the grand old Malay party that has been the lynchpin of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition.

“For this first leg, the bus will be taking our leaders to four states — Pahang, Kelantan, Perak and Kedah,” PKR secretary-general Datuk Saifuddin Nasution Ismail told reporters this morning at the launch of the tour outside the party’s national headquarters here, which coincides with the country’s 55th National Day.

“While our overall support in urban and suburban areas is comfortable, we do have limited resources to reach into rural areas. This bus grants us this flexibility,” he said.

He said party leaders hoped to reach deeper into the Malay heartland and create greater awareness about national concerns among rural voters.

The bus would make pit stops at night markets today to enable party leaders to mingle with the locals and better explain the opposition’s various proposed policies to improve governance and boost the economy and their social impact in its bid to wrest federal control from the BN coalition at the 13th general election that must be called by next April, Saifuddin said.

“We will be handing out flyers and leaflets wherever we stop, highlighting our campaigns such as the ‘Turunkan Harga Kereta’ (Lower Car Prices) campaign and our expose of the National Feedlot Corporation scandal,” the Machang MP said.

The Pakatan Rakyat (PR) opposition pact has promised that if it takes power at the next polls, it will cut down the existing heavy triple taxes imposed on imported cars and make them more affordable.

PKR leaders, especially its strategy chief Rafizi Ramli, have been spearheading exposes of several financial irregularities over multimillion public projects, notably the RM250 million National Feedlot Centre (NFC) scandal that was run by Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil’s husband Datuk Seri Mohamad Salleh Ismail and the couple’s three children.

Saifuddin also said today’s journey will end with a stop at the Tanah Merah Town Council field in Kelantan, where PKR leaders will be received by the state’s menteri besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat.

Nik Aziz, who is also PAS spiritual adviser, will be present for a Ceramah Perdana Merdeka Rakyat scheduled to begin at 9 tonight.

The party's electoral campaign blitz is headed by Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who is also PKR president.

Others on the bus tour include Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim.

PKR communications chief Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad told The Malaysian Insider that the party had planned to kick off its nationwide bus tour in July but was hampered by a lack of funds.

"We thought the bus launch in August, specifically on Merdeka Day itself, was appropriate with the theme," said Nik Nazmi, who is also a state lawmaker in Selangor.

Khalid, who is also PKR treasurer, said the idea of launching a bus to tour the nation was a PR strategy since before the 2008 elections.

"I lacked the resources then.

"But now, Rafizi and Nik Nazmi have no excuses to not come up with a proper campaign tour," Khalid said.

Hakcipta © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/on-n-day-pkr-heads-to-malay-heartland/>