

**Pakatan now aiming for more support from women**  
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**By Hafidz Baharom and Joan Lau**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 31 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) is ramping up its efforts to win over women voters with the formation of an initiative called Agenda Wanita Malaysia (Malaysian Women's Agenda) this September 13.

This comes on the back of political observers and analysts saying that both the youth and women are the swing voters who will determine who takes Putrajaya, as the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) and PR are locked in an almost even tussle for support.

As women make up half of the country's electorate, the fight for women voters is something the federal opposition is taking very seriously.

While reluctant to go into the details of the initiative ahead of the launch, Wanita PKR information chief Ramlah Bee Asiahoo said: "The agenda will focus on the enforcement of law, increasing quality of life, providing opportunity for women to involve themselves in the economy, revamping the educational policy, social harmony and the empowerment of young women."

Although this sounds very much like political rhetoric, the initiative seems to be more than just talk.

Srikandi PKR chief Siti Aishah Shaik Ismail said they would also head to the ground and host forums as well as ceramahs. "Once Agenda Wanita Malaysia is launched, we will head to the ground starting with rural areas, and then suburban areas and finally target the young working professionals in the cities.

Wong said apart from welfare, Pakatan will concentrate more on policies. "This is because those in the rural areas require more exposure than those in the suburban areas and cities," she said.

PR leaders are going to focus on bread-and-butter issues like safety and economy as it is believed that women vote principally on issues and established experience.

PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail recently began an initiative for mothers against crime, a growing issue especially among women in urban areas.

Another issue taking centre-stage the past week is the apparently lenient sentence for two men convicted of statutory rape, which both BN and PR have protested.

PAS Muslimat information chief Aiman Athirah Al-Jundi said the party's women's division would go door-to-door, a method that worked very well previously for Wanita Umno as well.

In recent years though, this personal touch has been replaced by mass gatherings where cash handouts are given to underprivileged families but now Agenda Wanita Malaysia is picking up where they dropped off.

"Giving aid is good, but it is very piecemeal and not enough. So apart from welfare, we must concentrate more on policies," said PKR central committee member Elizabeth Wong.

These policies have to be explained and this is where door-to-door visits can help to drill down the nuts and bolts of these proposed policies.

"We need to step into their houses, sit down and spend some time explaining what we have to offer," said Aiman.

In the race to win the next general election, it looks like the opposition is willing to do something a little retro — go down to the ground and meet potential voters face to face.

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