

**Raining on BN, PR parade, analysts say manifestos lack how-to's and policies**  
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**By Emily Ding**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 9 — Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) are hawking their respective election manifestos as the gold standard, but political pundits say both are scant on how to implement their solutions to the country's problems and lack a larger policy framework that unites their proposals.

Analysts The Malaysian Insider spoke to agreed that both coalitions are taking a populist, vote-buying approach in their manifestos, addressing issues they see as being important enough to swing the votes of the "kingmakers" in what has been tipped to be the closest election fight in the country's history.

"Both sides are a bit short on how they are going to deliver," Prof Dr Andrew Aeria, from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), told The Malaysian Insider.

"On the part of BN, it's simply because they haven't taken a manifesto seriously for a long time... They keep throwing out gifts and lollipops and instant noodles right, left and centre. At ceramahs, instead of talking about their manifesto they bash the other side," he said.

"On the part of Pakatan, I suspect they have very limited resources and are unable to put forward more ideas. I get the impression that the PR manifesto is the work of a small group of people who suffer the limitations of resources. Intellectual resources, not just money," he added.

Dr Sivamurugan Pandian, a political scientist at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), disagrees: "PR is not clear on how they will implement their manifesto. For BN, I think they have already shown how they have done it."

The BN manifesto lays out what the caretaker government has achieved in the past four years before laying out its intentions for the new term if re-elected.

However, Aeria sees the BN manifesto as one full of rhetoric that does not reflect reality.

"The one that really jumps out in the BN manifesto is 'scourge of corruption'. When people read that and I read that, I roll my eyes. You've got to be kidding me. It's an insult to our intelligence," he said.

"Both of them also lack a policy direction for the long term and sustainable solutions to address the economic, social and political issues in the country," Dr Faisal Hazis, a Kuching-based political scientist, told The Malaysian Insider.

"For example, what kind of policy do we want for our economy? Laissez-faire state or welfare state?" he said.

Aeria also provided suggestions for what the manifestos should have included: "There are a lot of goodies being given out on both sides. But what is our current debt level? How are we going to finance it? How are we going to overcome the rising debt of the country?"

However, he said the PR manifesto at least points out the key problems facing the country,

such as corruption and the lack of democracy.

Faisal agrees: "At least Pakatan tries to address the structural problems of the country in its manifesto, though they obviously sprinkle in some populist solutions as well."

He points out that both BN and PR recognise the importance of Sabah and Sarawak to voters in light of recent revelations on Project IC and Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud's alleged involvement in illegal land deals in Sarawak.

He also said that both coalitions are appealing to the same groups of voters like taxi drivers, women and youths, who may turn out to be kingmakers in the upcoming elections.

"In the end, what's important is what the fencesitters will be attracted to," Sivamurugan said.

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