

Pakatan uses Zul Noordin's BN ticket to woo Indian votes
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IPOH, April 17 — The Pakatan Rakyat (PR) is using Datuk Zulkifli Noordin's Shah Alam contest as campaign fodder to win Indian support, telling Malaysia's largest Indian-majority state seat here that Barisan Nasional's (BN) endorsement of the Muslim hardliner in Election 2013 was an insult to the community.

To a crowd of some 500 people at the Taman Buntong Harmoni flats here, DAP leaders took turns to encourage Indian voters to reject BN in the May 5 polls for "promoting" Zulkifli, who has been accused of spewing racial slurs at Indians

"Zul Noordin... he insulted the Hindus and yet, he was given the Shah Alam seat... it was a gift given by Najib. We don't want that," Perak DAP state committee member Dr V. Jayabalan told the crowd.

Buntong, a state seat in the DAP-held Ipoh Barat parliamentary constituency, is said to be home to the country's largest Indian community, which make up 48 per cent of the 22,907-strong electorate, followed by the Chinese at 44 per cent and Malays at six per cent.

BN chairman Datuk Seri Najib Razak confirmed Zulkifli's candidacy in Shah Alam when unveiling the pact's Selangor list yesterday, allowing the Kulim Bandar Baharu incumbent to contest directly on a BN ticket.

The decision earned the caretaker prime minister much criticism, largely due to Zulkifli's reputation as a Muslim hardliner, his post as the vice-president of Malay right wing group Perkasa, and the recent controversy over his insults against the Hindu community.

"He (Najib) boasted that 33 per cent of BN's [parliamentary] candidates are new faces. I am shocked that in the 33 per cent, he included these kinds of people — (those) who utter racial slurs inside and outside Parliament, who create racial disharmony," incumbent Ipoh Barat MP M. Kulasegaran told The Malaysian Insider at the sidelines of the ceramah here.

"The way he (Zulkifli) runs down the Indian community, I am surprised that the PM can think of him as a 'winnable' candidate.

"Oh, yes, I will be mentioning this in all my ceramahs," the DAP national deputy chairman added.

Ipoh Barat is a federal seat with the second-largest ratio of registered Indian voters in the country, with the community making up 25 per cent of its over 77,000 voters.

A video of Zulkifli uttering the word "Keling", which Malaysians of Indian descent consider derogatory, went viral recently, just days after another video was released in which he questioned an Indian trader on why Hindu gods did not prevent the man's shop from being flooded, drawing the wrath of Hindus.

Once a lawyer for opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Zulkifli had also questioned the purity of the Ganges River, also known as Ganga in India, which is considered sacred by Hindus.

A. Sivanesan, another Perak DAP state committee chairman, reminded the ceramah crowd last night that leaders in BN component party MIC had just recently lambasted Zulkifli for his insensitive remarks.

He pointed out that S. Vell Paari, the son of former MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, had even said that his party would lose Indian support to PR if no action is taken against the controversial Zulkifli.

"Today, I issue a challenge to him (Vell), to the MIC... since BN has promoted Zul Noordin to contest in Parliament, allowing him to become a legislator, what is going to happen to the MIC vote? Will they return to Pakatan?" Sivanesan asked.

The Sungkai incumbent said Zulkifli's insults have hurt many Indians here and Najib's selection of the controversial leader to represent BN in Shah Alam was a direct affront to the minority group.

He reminded that Shah Alam had been the site of the infamous "cowhead protest" in August 2008, when right-wing Malay groups dragged the bloodied head of the animal to the state secretariat building to rally against the state government's decision to shift a Hindu temple to a Malay-majority residential neighbourhood.

"And now you bring a person from Perkasa, you put him there to contest as a BN candidate... this Zul Noordin thing will only work to our benefit," Sivanesan said.

Zulkifli became a BN-friendly Independent MP and critical of the opposition when he was dismissed from PKR on March 6, 2010 over a police report he lodged against Shah Alam incumbent Khalid Abdul Samad.

Umno candidate Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin lost to Khalid in 2008 with a 9,314 majority. In 2004, he had won against Khalid with a 13,410 majority.

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