

**BN Needs to Refresh its Strategy in Teluk Intan**  
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**By Norshazlina Nor'azman**

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- Her appealing looks and witty approach is something difficult to ignore.

In fact, right in the midst of the election heat, it seems Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud, 27, the DAP candidate in the Teluk Intan by-election on May 31, is seen as a darling by many.

Nonetheless, her opponent, Barisan Nasional's (BN) Datuk Mah Siew Keong, 53, is local born and has a proven track record in politics and in serving the people.

Dyana Sofya is no match to this seasoned politician of BN, at least in experience and service record.

In fact, she had admitted that Mah's vast experience and disposition posed a serious challenge to her in the straight fight.

"Being a youngster and taking on a more experienced and highly respected opponent in Teluk Intan, is something that I have to face," she said recently.

DAP's adviser Lim Kit Siang too admitted that it was no easy road in maintaining the seat especially after the party took a bold step of nominating a young Malay lass, Dyana Sofya.

Dyana Sofya is also Lim's political secretary, and the Chinese based party's move to field a Malay candidate had created some furor at both sides of the divide.

**MAH IS NOT A SPENT FORCE**

Mah, the Gerakan party president, who represented the constituency for two terms after winning the 1999 and 2004 General Election (GE), lost the seat in the subsequent two general elections.

In spite of Mah's proven track record and better understanding of the local issues as he was born and bred in Teluk Intan, the new political landscape has made the race an uphill task for Mah.

A lecturer from the Communication and Media Studies Faculty at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Shah Alam Associate Professor Dr Ismail Sualman said with Mah's impeccable background, one should not be surprised if BN makes a comeback.

As for the locals, Mah is considered the 'old timer' or 'otai' in the Malay slang who can still

call the shots to attract the voters towards BN.

"I see his chances of winning is there only that he has to campaign the right way from now... the chances of BN winning is there and event if doesn't it could still reduce DAP's majority.

"Though Diyana Sofya has the looks and the aura to win over the voters but voters are fully aware that she is a newbie... Mah could win based on his vast experience and his capabilities," he said to Bernama.

### **A REFRESHED CAMPAIGN APPROACH IS NEEDED**

Ismail noted that to succeed, BN has to let go its conservative campaign approach and seen as more people friendly.

In this sense BN has to diversify and refresh its outdated campaign approaches that would not translate into votes.

"As for example in the Teluk Intan by-election, there is a need for a trademark campaign move that is 'catchy' and conducted in a relaxing manner, where it highlights Mah's strengths... among others like the use of the slogans 'the old timer who one can still deliver'.

"I see that the approach used by BN in delivering its aspirations remain conservative and in fact the campaign material like the posters remain outdated and unappealing," he said.

A more stronger and effective strategy has to be employed by highlighting the candidate's strength and BN's successful track record and the party's genuine concern for the people.

### **ACTIVE IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

The campaigns should not be restricted to the candidates alone, instead BN could tag along prominent persons, celebrities, NGO representatives or successful locals, to help step up the campaign fervour or act as spokesperson especially to reach out to the younger voters.

"The BN candidate's strength too has to be supported by prominent parties or individuals, ensuring people to people contact."

Apart from going to the ground to meet the people and join the campaign, BN has to actively use the numerous conduit available today including the social media to get into the hearts of the people.

"The 'ceramah' should be carried live through social networks or by uploading it immediately like in YouTube so that the people could access the content more easily," he said.

### **THE RIGHT CHOICE**

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin recently when announcing Mah as the candidate said, Mah was the best choice due to his long involvement in politics and knows the electorate there.

"Though he may have lost in the last election, I feel this is the place we are to see the resurrection of Gerakan," he said.

UMNO Youth Chief Khairy Jamaluddin noted that Mah's vast experience as the former two-term representative of the constituency and also as the former deputy minister could help BN win back support in the constituency.

The Teluk Intan Parliamentary seat fell vacant after its incumbent Seah Leong Peng, 48, from DAP died of cancer on May 1.

The Teluk Intan Parliamentary Constituency has a total of 60,349 registered voters and in the 13th GE, the late Seah obtained 27,399 votes to defeat Mah who received 20,086 votes and independent Moralingam Kannan (279 votes). Seah won with a 7,313 majority.

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