

## **PKR STRUGGLES FOR MALAY VOTE**

**Malaysia Today**

**May 6, 2015**

**By Joceline Tan, The Star**

THE ceramah in an area known for being a PAS stronghold in Permatang Pauh was the biggest since the start of the by-election campaign.

The speaker was the charismatic Datuk Ustaz Kazim Elias and from where he stood on the low stage, he could only see a sea of faces – about 7,000 people.

However, it was not a PAS gathering but an Umno religious ceramah. It caused a spectacular traffic jam and it has been the talk of the town.

Only about half of those attending could find seats while the rest had to sit on mats spread out under giant white tents erected in the field of a school. Umno had never experienced anything like that in Permatang Pauh and some of the leaders could not believe their eyes.

Ustaz Kazim was obviously brought in to reach out to the Malay fence-sitters.

The Malays, who make up 72% of the voters, will determine who wins the Permatang Pauh by-election. Barisan Nasional won 51% of the Malay votes in the general election and its new target is 60% or more.

It is hard to imagine Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail losing in Permatang Pauh but Pakatan Rakyat leaders are privately telling people it will be a wafer thin majority of win.

The PKR campaign had begun with a “sure win” level of confidence. Now, with just a day to go before the polls, the party’s strategic director, Sim Tze Tzin, shocked everyone at a press conference when he predicted a narrow loss if the voter turnout was low.

Some dismissed it as a psy-war tactic along the lines of the “Bangladeshi voters” rumours during the general election. The sceptics said it was a ploy to get outstation supporters to make the effort to come back and vote.

Pakatan insiders admit they are in trouble but are still hopeful of winning. Apart from the GST issue, little else has gone right for them – from the choice of Dr Wan Azizah to the PAS boycott over the hudud issue.

The PAS boycott of the by-election is very real. The PAS machinery has not moved and PAS supporters have stayed away. The crowd at a Sunday night ceramah at the PAS headquarters could not even fill up the sandy compound.

The only way for Dr Wan Azizah to recover the PAS support would be for PAS president Datuk Seri Hadi Awang himself to come and campaign for her. But none of the top PAS ulama has turned up to campaign for her.

Posters claiming that Hadi would be speaking at a ceramah tonight was quickly denied through his Twitter account as palsu (false). The denial came with a statement that Hadi would be busy elsewhere.

Pakatan is also staring at a minor swing in Chinese vote from 90% in the general election to about 80%.

The kopitiam talk is that this time some Chinese will suan chin piao, which is Hokkien for “vote for the dacing” – the Barisan symbol.

For instance, several hundred Chinese voters had run off to Pakatan when former Seberang Jaya assemblyman Datuk Arif Shah Omar Shah was put out to pasture in 2013.

Arif Shah, a top-notch YB who speaks fluent Mandarin and Hokkien, has been campaigning hard for the Barisan Nasional candidate Suhaimi Sabudin.

On Monday night, his terrace house was packed with middle-aged Chinese women and men singing Teresa Teng songs and eating kueh teow basah and satay.

It was like an alumni get-together except that they are supporters of Arif Shah who is asking them to vote for Suhaimi.

A recent advertisement in Sin Chew Daily put up by “Bored Voters” had declared: “We are fed-up, elections come and go but neither side can be trusted. They are only here for themselves, the result will be the same. It is meaningless to vote.”

But the Chinese group in Arif Shah’s house was the least bored or tired-looking in Permatang Pauh so far.

Shortly after nomination day, the bookies were taking bets for a win of 8,000 votes. This went down to 5,000 votes after a week.

The talk is that some bookies stopped accepting bets a few days ago, an indication that the bookies themselves are having trouble predicting the contest.

PKR's confidence has been sapped by the poor interest shown in their ceramah and events but despite the doom and gloom, Dr Wan Azizah is still the favourite to win.

The SOS call for external voters to return to vote is to prevent a recurrence of what happened in Teluk Intan where the low turnout cost DAP the seat.

Pakatan is leaving nothing to chance in the final lap. Last night, they held a mega anti-GST ceramah and they will be having another grand one tonight.

A prestigious seat is hanging in the balance and they intend to hold on to it.

**Copyright (C) 2004 - 2015 Malaysia Today. All Rights Reserved.**

Source: <http://www.malaysia-today.net/pkr-struggles-for-malay-vote/>