

Pasir Gudang: Umno confident of knocking wind out of Pakatan's sails

FREE MALAYSIA TODAY

March 1, 2018

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PASIR GUDANG: This town in Johor, known for its port and heavy industries, turns 100 in 2018.

Formerly known as Kampung Pasir Udang, it grew into several villages and eventually adopted the name of a warehouse used to store sand being shipped to Singapore.

Now, Pasir Gudang is home to Johor Port, the first port to be built in the state.

To its MP, Normala Abdul Samad, it is not just ships that dock there.

“Seasonal” opposition members also dock there every five years to try and make an impression on the Umno chokehold.

“They come to do work only when elections approach, unlike those of us who have been working here for so long,” Normala told FMT.

Pasir Gudang MP Normala Abdul Samad with Johor MB Mohamed Khaled Nordin.

In 2013, Normala, a newcomer, defeated PKR candidate Ahmad Faidi Saidi by a slim majority of 935 votes.

Almost half the voters in Pasir Gudang are Malays, with 38% Chinese and 11% Indians. The constituency was created in 2003.

It is one of the 40 mixed seats won with a small margin by BN and which Pakatan Harapan (PH) plans to wrest in GE14.

Khaled to return?

Normala would not comment on whether Johor MB Mohamed Khaled Nordin would stand again in the parliamentary seat due to his popularity.

In the 2013 general election, Khaled contested the Permas state seat, which is under the Pasir Gudang parliamentary constituency.

Khaled was formerly the Pasir Gudang MP, winning the seat in 2004 with a majority of over 31,000 votes to defeat PKR candidate A Razak Ahmad. He won the seat again in 2008 with a majority of more than 17,000 votes.

Before Pasir Gudang's introduction as a parliamentary seat, Khaled had won the Johor Bahru parliamentary seat three times in 1990, 1995 and 1999, holding the seat for 14 years.

Normala said what was important to her, and also all BN leaders in Johor, was to work hard to keep this seat.

For Normala, the declining support among Chinese voters is a problem that BN needs to remedy.

"We can't say whether they will vote for us or for DAP," she said. "But we are confident we can garner enough support in Pasir Gudang for BN to stay in power."

PKR has been allocated the Pasir Gudang seat to contest by PH but has yet to name its candidate.

Despite BN's vote majority shrinking in every general election since 2004, Johor PKR president Hassan Karim admits that it will be a close fight.

"We cannot take PH supporters for granted. If we are too sure of winning, it will make us careless."

Pasir Gudang PPBM division head Dr Hashim Yusoff was sure the Chinese voters would reject BN and Umno. "All we are waiting for is the Malay tsunami in GE14," said

In the coming general election, PPBM will contest in the Permas state seat and DAP will defend its Johor Jaya seat.

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