

Tamparuli shaping up to be one of hottest KDM battlegrounds

FREE MALAYSIA TODAY

March 5, 2018

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KOTA KINABALU: Tamparuli is set to be one of the hottest Kadazandusun Murut (KDM) battlegrounds after the Barisan Nasional (BN) lost its grip on the state seat in the 13th general election (GE13).

Before GE13, Tamparuli, which along with the Kiulu and Sulaman state constituencies make up the Tuaran parliamentary area, has always been considered as one of the BN strongholds in Sabah.

BN had inherited the stronghold by virtue of the seat being a traditional fort for PBS, stretching back as far as the days when the party was Sabah's ruling government in 1986.

But come GE14, Tamparuli, whose residents comprise mostly Dusun natives, looks likely to be one of those close calls as the ruling coalition rethinks its strategy to wrestle the seat from the opposition.

PBS supreme council member Jahid Jahim had won the seat handsomely two elections in a row in 2004 and 2008 but lost by a slim margin in May 2013 to veteran politician Wilfred Bumburing, who contested as a PKR candidate then.

Bumburing, who won the seat three times on a PBS ticket in 1986, 1990 and 1994, was the former Upko deputy president when he left his beloved party that he founded with Bernard Dompok. He subsequently quit BN in 2012 to contest under PKR.

He polled 6,862 votes compared with Jahid's 6,479 votes in GE13, snatching the seat by a difference of just 383 votes.

He has since left PKR to take over multiracial opposition outfit Parti Cinta Sabah (PCS), of which he is the president now.

Bumburing, a former Sabah deputy chief minister and ex-Tuaran BN chairman, confirmed he would defend his seat. Although acknowledging it could go down to the

wire, he was positive of retaining Tamparuli, a suburban area about 40km from the state capital.

“I can say I will defend Tamparuli and I’m confident that I can win it. This is because I’ve seen the people are more inclined towards supporting the opposition.

“This also means Tuaran as a whole. This is the mood on the ground in Tamparuli, Kiulu and even Sulaman,” he told FMT.

Being with the opposition, he conceded that funds for development were hard to come by but he claimed the people did not mind as they were aware he was fighting for their rights that have been ignored by the government.



Bumburing sharing a light moment with people during his visit in Tamparuli.

“The assemblyman’s allocation is managed by the district office but the people have not seen it. Where did it go? Also the same thing for the MP’s funds, where is it?

“But the people understand we are not given allocations. They are in fact looking at matters burdening them such as the goods and services tax (GST) and the high cost of living,” Bumburing said.

“Rural people are really feeling it as their income level is not that high,” he said, further claiming the BN government had also been selective when giving assistance, particularly in villages in Tamparuli.

“The KDM people are also not given a fair deal. PCS embodies the struggle of the KDM community in Sabah and we will fight for those rights.”

He added the government was also not doing enough to address social and religious matters, including the apostasy case in Sarawak and the “Allah” issue.

“What happened in Sarawak can affect us. All these are pertinent issues to the KDM people.

“That is why people want change ... that’s why we need a change of government,” Bumburing said.

Jahid turned the blame on the failure to deliver much progress for Tamparuli back on Bumburing, pointing out the people definitely want change but not as how the incumbent contended.

“That is indeed true. The people are thirsty for change and for Tamparuli to be part of the rapid development again.

People crossing the iconic Jambatan Tamparuli, a hanging bridge that is famous among locals and tourists in Tamparuli town.

“On his (Bumburing) performance, the people must be discerning whether the promises made before GE13 have been delivered. The people are smart to decide on performance versus promises,” said the PBS information chief.

Jahid acknowledged the candidate from BN faces a formidable challenge against Bumburing, a leader who he described possessed great experience. Ultimately, the people know what is best for them.

“The Tamparuli people yearn to feel all kinds of progress whether economically or infrastructure wise and it’s possible they may shift their support to BN this time,” said the former assistant state youth and sports minister.

In May 2013, Tamparuli saw a five-cornered fight involving Bumburing, Jahid, STAR's Linggu Bukut, who polled 589 votes, Stephan Gaimin of SAPP, who collected 185 votes, and independent candidate James Ongkili Jr, who garnered 126 votes.

About 64% of the 17,625 voters comprise non-Muslim Bumiputeras while Muslim Bumiputeras account for 23% and Chinese voters at 13%.

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