

PH Government must start delivering on promises or it's the door

Rantau voters send strong signal to government by voting Opposition for the third successive by-election

VOTE SWING TO BN IN RANTAU BY ELECTION														
BIL	KOD DEARAH MENGUNDI	RANTAU BY ELECTION						REMBAU GE2018			VOTER ETHNICITY			
		TOTAL VOTERS	TOK MAT	%	STRERAM	%	MAJORITY	UMNO	PKR	MAJORITY	MALAY %	CHINESE %	INDIAN %	OTHERS %
1	POS + UNDI AWAL	122	113	91.87	10	8.13	103							
2	KAMPONG SENDAYAN	757	455	74.35	101	16.50	354	268	254	14	81.62	7.38	9.26	1.74
3	SENDAYAN	2,698	1,633	76.77	472	22.19	1161	1120	901	219	78.64	6.49	14.38	0.49
4	TAMAN KELAB TUANKU	1,569	817	63.09	472	36.45	345	638	617	21	56	1.9	41.64	0.46
5	KAMPONG MAMBAU	543	243	61.36	148	37.37	95	209	213	-4	54.48	16.45	27.61	1.46
6	KAMPONG BEMBAN	547	374	81.48	83	18.08	291	274	142	132	91.34	1.62	7.04	0
7	KUALA SAWAH	2,562	1,030	53.23	878	45.37	152	830	1205	-375	42.43	33.93	23.37	0.27
8	KAMPONG SRI LALANG	1,308	769	72.89	277	26.26	492	594	392	202	68.21	16.47	15.16	0.15
9	KAMPONG SEGA	1,171	845	87.38	113	11.69	732	645	225	420	86.48	9.18	4.17	0.17
10	PEKAN SAGGA	677	263	50.38	252	48.28	11	234	275	-41	14.79	17.6	67.31	0.3
11	RANTAU	2,631	1,123	55.68	870	43.13	253	853	1189	-336	41.05	34.42	24.18	0.34
12	LIMSUM	1,350	574	52.90	493	45.44	81	497	529	-32	42.7	6.82	50.11	0.37
13	KAMPONG SILIAU	1,200	651	68.10	308	32.22	343	532	414	118	58.06	7.26	34.35	0.34
14	ANGSA EMAS	1,633	863	66.18	428	32.82	435	625	647	-22	55.36	13.32	30.63	0.7
15	BANDAR EKAR	2,158	644	39.22	982	59.81	-338	479	1207	-728	19.52	43.29	36.57	0.63
	TOTAL	20,926	10,397	63.22	5,887	35.80	4510	7798	8210	-412	53.74	18.8	26.99	0.46

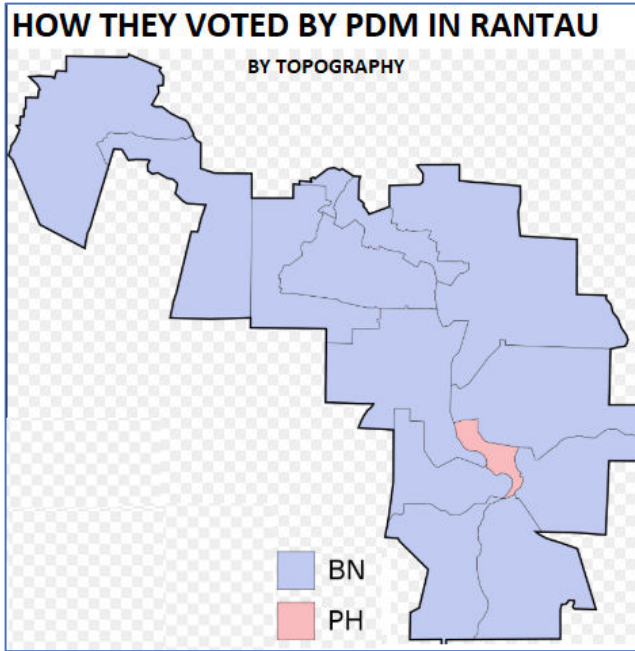
Source: INSAP data from Election Commission

In decisive fashion, Rantau voters signalled to the Pakatan Harapan government in their April 13 by-election that Malaysians are fed up with U-turns on government policies, poor performances among the cabinet at large, making excuses for not fulfilling pledges made to the people in its election manifesto, and letting the economy slide without giving an iota of concern about the increasing cost of living that all Malaysian are now struggling to address.

When vote counting was completed, the Election Commission (EC) declared Barisan Nasional's Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, better known as Tok Mat among his constituents, the winner of the Rantau by-election with a 4,510 vote majority. Tok Mat garnered 10,397 votes while Dr S. Streram from Pakatan Harapan (PH) took 5,887 votes. Independents R. Malarvizhi and Mohd Nor Yassin, who received 83 and 79 votes respectively, both lost their deposits. The EC stated that the turnout was 79.3% surpassing its target of 70%.

What was most significant from this by-election was the huge 16.76% vote swing for BN from 46.46% of total votes in GE14 to 63.22% in this by election. In comparison, PH suffered a negative 13.12% swing from 48.91% of total votes in GE14 to 35.8% in the by election. Therefore, Rantau saw a nett 3.64% swing to BN.

In the analysis of the Rantau by-election by the Institute of Strategic Analysis and Policy Research (INSAP), we can infer from the results that Malaysians used the by-election as referendum on the PH government's performance, besides reflecting the popularity of Tok Mat, who is the former Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar.



BN's win can also be seen in context of UMNO and PAS taking note of the sensitivities among the non-Malays over callous racial and religious rhetorics. There was no ethnically sensitive issues or statements from UMNO to antagonise non-Malay voters, except for the "penumpang" issue which Tok Mat clarified well, while PAS kept to a low-key on religion in their campaign with UMNO. Even though, PH raised issues of corruption in Feluda, Tabung Haji and Armed Forces Fund, LTAT, which it blamed on the BN administration, as well as attempts to character assassinate Tok Mat by

labelling him "penyamun" (thief), Rantau voters shrug off such tired narratives, in all but two PDMs, as they knew Tok Mat's character since he had served three terms in Rantau, and had brought much economic development to this constituency.

In analysing the Rantau by-election voting pattern, we opted to compare with the Rantau voting pattern in GE14 for the parliament seat of Rembau, in which Rantau is one of four State constituencies under Rembau. This is to facilitate a comparison of apple with apple as the PH government was an opposition in GE13 while it took the reins of the Federal government in GE14. Therefore, a more accurate measure of ground sentiment is reflected when comparing how Rantau voted for the parliament seat of Rembau in GE14 with this by-election. Tok Mat won Rantau uncontested in GE14 but the court ordered a reelection of the seat subsequently after Stream filed an appeal.

Vote swing to BN

Overall, it was a thumping win for Tok Mat. In GE14, based on the result of the Rembau parliament votes attributed to Rantau, **BN gained 4,922 votes – seen from the deficit of minus 412 votes in GE14 to a 4,510 vote majority in the by-election.** Even discounting the fact that in GE14, the Rantau DUN seat had only 20,472 voters and that it had increased by 454 votes in the by-election, the 4,922 votes gained represented 29.9% of the 16,446 votes cast in the by-election.

Significantly, out of 15 designated voting districts (PDM), BN won in all but one – **Bandar Ekar where BN lost by 338 votes. Even here, there was a silver lining in defeat as in GE14, BN lost this PDM by 728 votes and had now regained 390 votes which represents a gain of 53.57%.** PDM Bandar Ekar is a mixed ethnic centre with 43.29% Chinese, 36.57% Indian and 19.52% Malay.

In two other mixed ethnic centres with high Chinese representation:

- **Rantau saw a return of 589 votes** from a deficit of 336 in GE14 to a BN majority of 253, and,
- **Kuala Sawah saw a return of 527 votes** from a deficit of 375 in GE14 to a BN majority of 152.

PDM Rantau is a mixed ethnic centre with 34.42% Chinese, 24.18% Indian and 41.05% Malay while Kampung Sawah is 33.93% Chinese, 22.37% Indian and 42.43% Malay.

Malay majority areas also saw significant 2,043 votes swing to BN even within its own strongholds:

- In **PDM Kg Sendayan**, with 81.82% Malay majority, BN increased its majority of 14 votes to 354 which meant it **gained 340 votes**;
- In **PDM Sendayan**, with 78.64% Malay majority, BN increased its majority of 219 votes to 1,161 which meant it **gained 942 votes**;
- In **PDM Kg Sega**, with 86.48% Malay majority, BN increased its majority of 420 votes to 732 which meant it **gained 312 votes**;
- In **PDM Kg Bemban**, with 91.34% Malay majority, BN increased its majority of 132 votes to 291 which meant it **gained 159 votes**; and,
- In **PDM Kg Sri Lalang**, with 68.21% Malay majority, BN increased its majority of 202 votes to 492 which meant it **gained 290 votes**.

For mixed ethnicity PDMs which BN lost in GE14, it had regained these areas with a 1,777 overall vote swing:

- In **PDM Angsa Emas**, with 55.36% Malay majority, BN lost this in GE14 by 22 votes but had now won by 435 votes which meant it **gained 457 votes**;
- In **PDM Rantau**, with 41% Malay, BN lost this in GE14 by 336 votes but had now won by 253 votes which meant it **gained 589 votes**;
- In **PDM Kuala Sawah**, with 42.43% Malay, BN lost this in GE14 by 375 votes but had now won by 152 votes which meant it **gained 527 votes**;
- In **PDM Kg Mambau**, with 54.48% Malay majority, BN lost this in GE14 by 4 votes but had now won by 95 votes which meant it **gained 91 votes**; and,
- In **PDM Linsum**, with 50.11% Indians, BN lost this in GE14 by 32 votes but had now won by 81 votes which meant it **gained 113 votes**;

BN retained two mixed ethnic PDMs with a 549 overall vote swing:

- In **PDM Kg Siliu**, with 58.06% Malay majority, BN won this in GE14 by 118 votes but now retained it by 343 votes which meant it **gained 225 votes**;
- In **PDM Kg Kelab Tuanku**, with 56% Malay majority, BN won this in GE14 by 21 votes but now retained it by 345 votes which meant it **gained 324 votes**;

For the solitary Indian super majority PDM of Pekan Sagga, BN lost this in GE14 by 41 votes but had now won by 11 votes which meant it gained 52 votes.

Another psychological boost for BN can be read in terms of ballot boxes counted as a win. Out of 56 ballot boxes issued to 15 voting centres, BN prevailed in 48 boxes leaving just eight boxes won by Dr Streram. Those eight ballot boxes which counted

to BN losses included all five boxes from urban PDM Bandar Ekar; both boxes in rural PDM Linsum, and one of the two boxes in rural PDM Pekan Sagga. Bandar Ekar is a mixed PDM with 43.29% Chinese voters, 36.57% Indian and 19.52% Malay voters, while Linsum is another mixed PDM with 50.11% Indian, 42.7% Malay and 6.82% Chinese.

The read from the ballot boxes gave an insight to voting patterns by age group, especially in large urban voting centres:

- In **PDM Bandar Ekar**, although BN lost in all streams, the key takeaway was that **Tok Mat was only narrowly beaten in Stream No.5, which counts the youths. Here, Streram won 167 to 158**, but from Streams No.2 to No.4, the gap was huge at 212-152, 219-107 and 174-104 reflecting the voice of working-class Malaysians. At Stream No.1 for seniors, it was 174-104 for Streram.

What we can infer from this data stream is that PDM Bandar Ekar, being a new residential housing development for the middle income group, shows that the professionals still buys into the PH's rhetorics over alleged corruption under the previous BN government although this narrative is now losing resonance.

- In **PDM Rantau**, a mixed ethnic constituency of 41.07% Malay, 34.42% Chinese and 24.18% Indian voters, **BN won all six streams** at SKJC Chung Hwa Rantau. **At the youth stream six, Tok Mat won 252 to 148 validating that youths now support BN.** Among the senior voters at Stream No.1, Tok Mat won 143 to 96. Tok Mat took subsequent streams at 161-127, 139-131, 214-177 and 214-191. Results of these streams speaks for the working Malaysians.
- In **PDM Kuala Sawah, BN also won in all streams.** Kuala Sawah, which is 42.43% Malay, 33.93% Chinese and 23.37% Indians, however saw the **younger voters at Stream No.6 coming close at 175-153**, while Streams No.1 to No.5 read 135-104, 155-127, 190-162, 185-168, 190-164.

And if the voting pattern of **Pekan Sagga is taken to represent Indians choice, it indicates that they are split between PH and BN.** In this PDM, which has 67.31% Indian voters, 17.6% Chinese and 14.79% Malay voters, Streram won the Stream No.1 135-108 but Tok Mat won Stream No.2 155-117

PH vote swing 2019 vs 2018

Significantly, **PH votes in every PDM in Rantau tumbled into the red.** Seen from an ethnic lens, the most serious was a **negative 16.38% average overall vote swing among Malay super-majority PDMs against PH** (see chart on next page).

- In **PDM Kg Sendayan**, with 81.82% Malay majority, **it was minus 26.26%**,
- In **PDM Sendayan**, with 78.64% Malay majority, **it was minus 19.34%**;
- In **PDM Kg Sega**, with 86.48% Malay majority, **it was minus 12.38%**;
- In **PDM Kg Bemban**, with 91.34% Malay majority, **it was minus 12.19%**;

- In PDM Kg Sri Lalang, with 68.21% Malay majority, it was minus 11.73%.

For mixed ethnicity PDMs, PH saw an average overall vote swing of negative 10.79%:

- In PDM Angsa Emas, with 55.36% Malay majority, it was minus 15.32%;
- In PDM Rantau, with 41% Malay, it was minus 12.9%;
- In PDM Kuala Sawah, with 42.43% Malay, it was minus 12.17%;
- In PDM Kg Siliu, with 58.06% Malay majority, it was minus 10.75%;
- In PDM Kg Kelab Tuanku, with 56% Malay majority, it was minus 10.4%;
- In PDM Kg Mambau, with 54.48% Malay majority, it was minus 10.28%;
- In PDM Bandar Ekar, with 43.29% Chinese, it was minus 10.45%; and,
- In PDM Linsum, with 50.11% Indians, it was minus 4.09%.

		REMBAU GE2018						RANTAU BE2019				BN VOTES SWING		PH VOTES SWING		NET VOTE SWING
BIL	NO. KOD DAERAH MENGUNDI	BN	%	PH	%	PAS	%	BN	%	PH	%	VOTES	%	VOTES	%	%
1	POS + UNDI AWAL							113	91.87%	10	8.13%					
2	KAMPONG SENDAYAN	268	46.77%	254	44.33%	51	8.90%	455	81.40%	101	18.07%	187	34.62%	-153	-26.26%	8.36%
3	SENDAYAN	1,120	51.71%	901	41.60%	145	6.69%	1,633	76.99%	472	22.25%	513	25.28%	-429	-19.34%	5.94%
4	TAMAN KELAB TUANKU	638	48.44%	617	46.85%	62	4.71%	817	63.09%	472	36.45%	179	14.65%	-145	-10.40%	4.24%
5	KAMPONG MAMBAU	209	46.76%	213	47.65%	25	5.59%	243	61.36%	148	37.37%	34	14.61%	-65	-10.28%	4.33%
6	KAMPONG BEMBAN	274	58.42%	142	30.28%	53	11.30%	374	81.48%	83	18.08%	100	23.06%	-59	-12.19%	10.86%
7	KUALA SAWAH	830	39.64%	1,205	57.55%	59	2.82%	1,030	53.23%	878	45.37%	200	13.59%	-327	-12.17%	1.42%
8	KAMPONG SRI LALANG	594	57.56%	392	37.98%	46	4.46%	769	72.89%	277	26.26%	175	15.33%	-115	-11.73%	3.60%
9	KAMPONG SEGA	645	68.98%	225	24.06%	65	6.95%	845	87.38%	113	11.69%	200	18.40%	-112	-12.38%	6.02%
10	PEKAN SAGGA	234	44.23%	275	51.98%	20	3.78%	263	50.38%	252	48.28%	29	6.15%	-23	-3.71%	2.44%
11	RANTAU	853	40.20%	1,189	56.03%	80	3.77%	1,123	55.68%	870	43.13%	270	15.48%	-319	-12.90%	2.58%
12	LINSUM	497	46.54%	529	49.53%	42	3.93%	574	52.90%	493	45.44%	77	6.37%	-36	-4.09%	2.27%
13	KAMPONG SILIAU	532	54.79%	414	42.64%	25	2.57%	651	67.39%	308	31.88%	119	12.60%	-106	-10.75%	1.85%
14	ANGSA EMAS	625	46.50%	647	48.14%	72	5.36%	863	66.18%	428	32.82%	238	19.68%	-219	-15.32%	4.36%
15	BANDAR EKAR	479	27.88%	1,207	70.26%	32	1.86%	644	39.22%	982	59.81%	165	11.34%	-225	-10.45%	0.89%
		7,798	46.46%	8,210	48.91%	777	4.63%	10,397	63.22%	5,887	35.80%	2,599	16.76%	-2,323	-13.12%	3.64%

Source: INSAP data from Election Commission

For the solitary Indian super majority PDM of Pekan Sagga, there was minus 3.71% vote swing for PH from GE14 in this 67.31% Indian voting centre;

As there are no PDMs with clear Chinese majority, we are unable to empirically certify the vote swing among the Chinese. However, in three PDMs with high Chinese voters, there was an average vote swing of minus 11.84% for PH. It was:

- Negative 12.17% swing in Kuala Sawah, with 42.43% Malay and 33.93% Chinese;
- Negative 12.9% spiral in Rantau, with 41% Malay and 34.42% Chinese;
- Negative 10.45% flop in Bandar Ekar, with 43.29% Chinese and 36.57% Indian;

In sum, the shift in the Malay ground is potentially representative of the UMNO-PAS cooperation facilitating consolidation of opposition votes, while at the same time, showed that Malays were more comfortable with Tok Mat compared with Dr Streram. Therefore, the 16.38% average overall vote slump led PH to lose a whopping 868 votes among the Malay super majority PDMs:

- 153 votes in PDM Kg Sendayan;
- 429 votes in PDM Sendayan;

- 112 votes in PDM Kg Sega;
- 59 votes in PDM Kg Bemban;
- 115 votes in PDM Kg Sri Lalang.

Among the mixed ethnicity PDMs, PH lost a thumping 1,442 votes:

- In PDM Angsa Emas, it lost 219 votes;
- In PDM Rantau, it lost 319 votes;
- In PDM Kuala Sawah, it lost 327 votes;
- In PDM Kg Siliau, it lost 106 votes;
- In PDM Kg Kelab Tuanku, it lost 145 votes;
- In PDM Kg Mambau, it lost 65 votes;
- In PDM Bandar Ekar, it lost 225 votes;
- In PDM Linsum, it lost 36 votes;

At the Indian super majority Pekan Sagga, PKR lost a marginal 23 votes, indicating it was able to hold support among Indian voters since GE14.

BN vote swing 2019 vs 2018

In terms of **average vote swing for BN, it was 23.34% among Malay super-majority PDMs. These gained 1,175 votes for BN** in the by-election compared with GE14:

- **PDM Kg Sendayan at 34.62% swing** which translates to an **additional 187 votes;**
- **PDM Sendayan at 25.28% swing** which translates to an **additional 513 votes;**
- **Kg Bemban 23.06% swing** which translates to an **additional 100 votes;**
- **PDM Kg Sega at 18.4% swing** which translates to an **additional 200 votes;** and,
- **PDM Kg Sri Lalang at 15.33% swing** which translates to an **additional 175 votes.**

For mixed ethnicity PDMs, there was an average vote swing of 13.54% which translated to 1,282 votes for BN:

- In PDM Angsa Emas, it was 19.68% swing for 238 more votes;
- **In PDM Rantau, it was 15.48% swing for 270 more votes;**
- **In PDM Kuala Sawah, it was 13.59% swing for 200 more votes;**
- In PDM Kg Siliau, it was 12.6% swing for 119 more votes;
- In PDM Kg Kelab Tuanku, it was 14.65% for 179 more votes;
- In PDM Kg Mambau, it was 14.61% swing for 34 more votes;
- **In PDM Bandar Ekar, it was 11.34% swing for 165 more votes;** and,
- In PDM Linsum, it was 6.37% swing for 77 more votes.

The three PDMs with high Chinese voters are Kuala Sawah, Rantau and Bandar Ekar. **The average vote swing here was 13.47% which translated to 635 more votes.**

For the solitary Indian super majority PDM of Pekan Sagga, there was 6.15% vote swing which translates to 29 more votes.

Nett swing by PDM 2019 vs 2018

In terms of nett vote swing for the Rantau by-election, it was an average of 6.95% among Malay super-majority PDMs:

- PDM Kg Sendayan, it was 8.36%,
- PDM Sendayan, it was 5.94%;
- PDM Kg Sega, it was 6.02%,
- PDM Kg Bemban, it was 10.87%,
- PDM Kg Sri Lalang, it was 3.6%.

For mixed ethnicity PDMs, the nett swing was 2.75%. In:

- PDM Angsa Emas, it was 4.36%
- PDM Rantau, it was 2.58%
- PDM Kuala Sawah, it was 1.42%
- PDM Kg Siliau, it was 1.85%
- PDM Kg Kelab Tuanku, it was 4.25%
- PDM Kg Mambau, it was 4.33%
- PDM Bandar Ekar, it was 0.89%, and,
- PDM Linsum, it was 2.27%.

For the solitary Indian super majority PDM of Pekan Sagga, there was a 2.44% nett swing.

Vote 2019 vs 2013

RANTAU VOTES 2019 VS 2013																		
BIL	NO. KOD DAERAH MENDUNDI	RANTAU GE2013				RANTAU BE2019				GE2018				BN VOTE SWING		PR VOTE SWING		NETT VOTE SWING
		BN	PR	BN	PH	MALAY %	CHINESE %	INDIAN %	OTHERS %	VOTES	%	VOTES	%	%	%	%		
1	POS + UNDI AWAL	139	94.56%	8	5.44%	113	91.87%	10	8.13%					-26	-2.69%	2	2.69%	0.00%
2	KAMPONG SENDAYAN	796	71.33%	320	28.67%	455	81.40%	101	18.07%	81.62	7.38	9.26	1.74	-341	10.07%	-219	-10.61%	-0.54%
3	SENDAYAN	701	75.30%	230	24.70%	1633	76.99%	472	22.25%	78.64	6.49	14.38	0.49	932	1.70%	242	-2.45%	-0.75%
4	TAMAN KELAB TUANKU	766	68.33%	355	31.67%	817	63.09%	472	36.45%	56.00	1.90	41.64	0.46	51	-5.24%	117	4.78%	-0.46%
5	KAMPONG MAMBAU	1005	63.97%	566	36.03%	243	61.36%	148	37.37%	54.48	16.45	27.61	1.46	-762	-2.61%	-418	1.35%	-1.26%
6	KAMPONG BEMBAN	345	71.28%	139	28.72%	374	81.48%	83	18.08%	91.34	1.62	7.04	0.00	29	10.20%	-56	-10.64%	-0.44%
7	KUALA SAWAH	1098	55.09%	895	44.91%	1030	53.23%	878	45.37%	42.43	33.93	23.37	0.27	-68	-1.86%	-17	0.47%	-1.40%
8	KAMPONG SRI LALANG	767	72.09%	297	27.91%	769	72.89%	277	26.26%	68.21	16.47	15.16	0.15	2	0.80%	-20	-1.66%	-0.85%
9	KAMPONG SEGA	810	81.65%	182	18.35%	845	87.38%	113	11.69%	86.48	9.18	4.17	0.17	35	5.73%	-69	-6.66%	-0.93%
10	PEKAN SAGGA	390	66.78%	194	33.22%	263	50.38%	252	48.28%	14.79	17.60	67.31	0.30	-127	-16.40%	58	15.06%	-1.34%
11	RANTAU	1837	51.50%	1730	48.50%	1123	55.68%	870	43.13%	41.05	34.42	24.18	0.34	-714	4.18%	-860	-5.37%	-1.19%
12	LINSUM	742	67.27%	361	32.73%	574	52.90%	493	45.44%	42.70	6.82	50.11	0.37	-168	-14.37%	132	12.71%	-1.66%
13	KAMPONG SILIAU	730	75.57%	236	24.43%	651	67.39%	308	31.88%	58.06	7.26	34.35	0.34	-79	-8.18%	72	7.45%	-0.72%
14	ANGSA EMAS					863	66.18%	428	32.82%	55.36	13.32	30.63	0.70	863	66.18%	428	32.82%	
15	BANDAR EKAR					644	39.22%	982	59.81%	19.52	43.29	36.57	0.63	644	39.22%	982	59.81%	
		10126	64.75%	5513	35.25%	10397	63.22%	5887	35.80%	53.74	18.80	26.99	0.46	271	-1.53%	374	0.54%	-0.99%

Source: INSAP data from Election Commission

Just for academic reference, although BN received 271 more votes during the by-election when compared with GE13, this represented a decline of 1.53% in terms of percentage of total votes due to a higher voter base of 20,926 and higher number of voters voting in the by-election. In GE13, Tok Mat received 10,126 votes compared with 10,397 during the by-election. In terms of percentage of overall votes at each election, Tok Mat's share in 2013 was 64.75% of total votes and this declined by a nett 1.53% at the by-election as his share was only 63.22% of total votes.

For PKR, although Dr Streram lost, he did better than Aisah Lamsah in 2013. Aisah received 5,513 votes while Streram received 5,887 which means PKR's votes increased by 374 votes or 6.78% at the by-election over 2013. In terms of percentage of overall votes at each election, **PKR's share in 2013 was 35.25% of total votes and this increased by a nett 0.54% at the by-election as PKR's share share was 35.8% of total votes.**

Taken in context of GE13, the **nett swing vote was just 1% in Rantau.**

In 2013, the turnout was 87.09% or 15,878 while at the by-election, it fell to 79.31% although total turnout of voters was higher at 16,596. This was because in 2013, there were only 18,232 registered voters in Rantau and this increased by 14.8% to 20,926 at the by-election.

Given the fact that the next by-election is on May 11 for the parliament constituency of Sandakan, and coming on the trot of three successive by-election defeats after Cameron Highlands parliament seat and the Semenyih state seat, it is without doubt that Pakatan Harapan will now have to give full attention towards fulfilling what had been promised in its GE14 Election Manifesto. The people are tired of the PH Ministers singing the same tune of blaming the previous BN government for amassing a RM1 trillion debt as an excuse for being unable to address the high cost of living, cutting back on subsidies for farmers, fishermen and the the B40 poor, and allowing the economy to stagnate with economists downgrading growth. The Economist Intelligence Unit has cut Malaysian real GDP growth to 4.6% in 2019 from 4.7% in 2018 while ICAEW's latest *Economic Insight: South-East Asia report* pared growth in 2019 to 4.5%, down from 4.8% in 2018.

Recommendations

The mood of Barisan Nasional has been significantly lifted for the first time since its momentous defeat in GE14. And there are significant lessons from its success in Rantau which needs to become the standard operating procedures for the future:

1. Suitability of candidate

As in Cameron Highlands and Semenyih where BN won earlier, the Rantau by-election again showed that choosing a local candidate is key. Tok Mat was not only local, he was likeable, and his appeal cut across all ethnic groups. These factors enabled BN to deflect the negative campaign by PH which centred on tired narratives of corruption as Rantau voters knew they can trust Tok Mat compared with Streram who is almost unknown and unacceptable to the Malay ground. If PH had fielded a Malay candidate as their grassroots requested, the contest could have been arguably tighter.

2. Moderation from PAS & UMNO

The Rantau by-election saw for the first time an absence of religious and racially sensitive rhetorics even with PAS working with UMNO on the ground. None of the UMNO leaders issued racially sensitive statements that will stir the non-Malay communities and this gave the fence sitters no grounds to register protest votes.

3. Connect with voters through hot-button issues

BN hit the sweet spot in using PH's failure to fulfil its GE14 100-day manifesto. There were many segments in society which are unhappy and they are now stirred to show their displeasure by their vote.

4. Effective machinery to engage voters

UMNO/BN machinery in Rantau was highly effective in bringing out voters resulting in the highest turnout of any by-election since GE14.

5. Strengthen Youth engagement

Analysis of voting by streams showed that Malay youths are back with BN. Stream 5 and Stream 6 voting patterns shows that non-Malay youths are beginning to swing, as evidenced by PDM Bandar Ekar where BN lost 158 to 167.

6. Continue to split Pakatan Harapan

The Rantau by-election is a major slap in the face for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who personally led the campaign as the Rembau PKR was split by his decision to field Dr Streram instead of a Malay candidate in this 54% Malay-majority seat. Beyond this localised dispute, the larger issue was failure by Bersatu to campaign for PKR in Rantau, just as PKR avoided campaigning for Bersatu in Semenyih. This is "silent" a tit-for-tat war in PH, and BN must exploit this, even covertly, to destabilise the PH government. In the current atmosphere of renewed Malay unity under UMNO-PAS, there is good possibility that if Dr Mahathir's government collapses, he will rather call for snap elections, which will give BN a sea change to win sufficient seats to alter the political dynamics of Malaysia.

INSAP Report

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