

PAKATAN Harapan was still hopeful about winning in Sungai Bakap up until the very last hour of campaigning, their optimism likely shored up by the rosy predictions of two leading think-tanks.

This was despite the disinterested mood among the locals and their visible discontent over cost of living issues.

An Umno official from a neighbouring state said it was a “diesel-driven campaign,” alluding to the rationalisation of diesel subsidies that has resulted in an increase in the price of goods.

Things were made worse by Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli’s hint of another “surprise” involving RON95 petrol midway through the by-election campaign.

What annoyed people was the playful way he spoke of the “surprise” in an interview with Bloomberg, as though it was something to look forward to.

“It backfired. People struggling with rising prices are told of more hardship to come. How to do damage control on this type of news?” said the Umno official.

Perikatan Nasional, although the incumbent, was not exactly confident about winning either.

Their candidate Abidin Ismail or Abang Abidin was more politically savvy but Pakatan’s Dr Joohari Ariffin or Cikgu Joohari had credentials that made him ideal for the legislative role of an assemblyman.

Joohari would make a good candidate just about anywhere, and he was backed up by government machinery that included campaign workers, dinners, duri-

# Green wave is not over yet

Despite having the resources and a superior candidate in Cikgu Joohari, Pakatan Harapan could not stop the Malay wave of discontent that carried Abang Abidin to victory in the Sungai Bakap by-election.



JOCELINE TAN

## Analysis

an parties, and a string of Pakatan ministers arriving to campaign for him.

Perikatan was actually unsure about holding on to the seat because of the muted mood.

As such, Abidin seemed more relieved than jubilant when he emerged victorious with a majority of more than 4,000 votes, more than doubling the previous majority. And as the campaign progressed, there was a sense that this election was less about aspirational politics than about dislike, suspicion, fear and teaching this or that side a lesson.

Pakatan appealed to the non-Malays, who make up about 40% of the 39,279 voters, to stop the green wave, playing on their fear of PAS’ Islamic agenda.

On the Perikatan side, it was

about asking voters to take their grievances to the ballot box

It is ironic that Pakatan leaders, who enjoyed near superstar status when they were the Opposition, seem to have lost their glow now that they are the government.

Rafizi was stationed in Sungai Bakap throughout the final week, taking to the ceramah stage every night. He was the only one able to argue the case for the targeted diesel subsidy in an objective way. But Rafizi was a much more successful opposition figure than he is a government figure. He has had to endure attacks since becoming a minister and has been lampooned as “Raja Formula”. At one ceramah, a woman could be heard calling out “Lapuji,” a pun on his name, implying that he was painting a sunny picture of a gloomy situation.

A few nights before polling day, Deputy Works Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Maslan could be seen spouting pantun on stage to lots of empty chairs. But that did not mean that Malays who did not support PKR were gravitating towards Perikatan. Some of them were not inspired to vote.

A Wanita Umno member from Selangor who returned to spend

the long weekend in her kampung, was taken aback when her relatives told her they were undecided about whether they would go out to vote.

When the Malay ground remained cold after several days of campaigning, an SOS went out to Umno to reach out to its members. The party has some 5,000 members in Sungai Bakap.

However, many Malay villages, like Sungai Duri and Sungai Kechil, are no longer Umno strongholds.

Umno lost touch with many seats after Pakatan captured Penang in 2008. Umno campaigners gave up after going around Sungai Duri for several days because it had turned black for Umno.

Despite being in power for 16 years, Pakatan failed to penetrate the Malay heartland which has swung to PAS. It is also unfair to blame PAS for not bringing development to Sungai Bakap, which has been under PKR since 2008 and only fell to PAS in 2023.

The Chinese vote going by the narrow margin in certain voting areas has also softened, and some have attributed it to unhappiness over the 10As and above ruling for admission into any

matriculation programmes.

To compound things, many Umno members are still reluctant to support PKR. An aide to an Umno politician said that a hardcore Umno member admitted to him that he voted for Perikatan.

More alarming was the video clip of an Umno member, clad in a red shirt that was embroidered with the Umno logo and his name, declaring that he had come over from nearby Batu Kawan to campaign against Pakatan.

The video, which went viral, showed him saying that he wanted Pakatan to lose so that Umno could contest the seat in the next election. He could be courting disciplinary action from his party.

Pakatan put up a good campaign, and the unity government has bent over backwards to appease the Malays.

But it could not hold back the green wave, which seems to be gathering strength in the Malay heartland of Penang.

Perikatan’s improved majority also means that Umno is still unable to convince its members about their place in the unity government.

**The views expressed here are entirely the writer’s own.**

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## STEMMING THE TIDE OF DIABETES

Almost four million Malaysians or 18.3% of the adult population have type two diabetes, fuelled by soaring obesity levels, sedentary lifestyles and cheap junk food laced with copious amounts of sugar.

Compounding the problem, around five million Malaysians are pre-diabetic. Diabetes treatment amounts to around RM4bil annually and if things continue going south, the endocrine disease will have a seismic impact, not only on our health but on the nation’s coffers.

Globally, almost 400mil people suffer from diabetes. And this number is expected to rise by epidemic proportions to 700mil by 2045.

Against this backdrop, UCSI University’s Prof Dr Mogana Rajagopal highlights the importance of self-monitoring blood glucose (SMBG) initiatives that empower patients to take greater control of their health.

With 24 years of pharmacy practice behind her, she has seen many success stories where diabetics and pre-diabetics improve their conditions.

Typically, SMBG is done using glucose monitoring devices precisely before a meal and two hours post-meal.



**PURPOSEFUL PREP:** UCSI Pharmacy students undergoing OSCE training.

“Incorporating SMBG into your daily routine may be daunting at first as needle pricks are required for glucose monitoring,” says Prof Mogana who serves as dean of UCSI’s Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences.

“But with the right tools and guidance, SMBG becomes a seamless routine. Instead of monitoring every meal daily, one can monitor specific meals over a week - breakfast on Mondays or lunch on Tuesdays.

“After consolidating all readings, blood

glucose patterns can be identified for each meal, reducing the number of needle pricks needed.”

She adds that simple acts like keeping a blood glucose journal to track readings, patterns and lifestyle adjustments can significantly reduce the risks of nerve damage, kidney failure and vision-related problems.

Wearable devices like smartwatches may also streamline the glucose monitoring process. And some are quick to opine that they may even negate needle pricking altogether.

However, Prof Mogana is quick to point out that the present generation of wearables falls short of the gold standard that comes with needle pricking.

“Technology has improved tremendously but presently, the best devices provide accuracy levels which are lower than the accuracy levels that can be achieved through the blood glucose meter.

“Pharmacy triage also improves the situation. Through consultation with patients, pharmacists may detect symptoms of a disease at an early stage and proceed for patient referral.”

She adds that pharmacists play a crucial role in sharing SMBG best practices with patients, assisting in the selection of monitoring devices, helping to interpret data and recommending electronic wearables or digital technologies.

At UCSI, Pharmacy students undergo compulsory objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) that trains and equips them with clinical skills that simulate real-life interactions with patients. All students undergo comprehensive real-time training at various practice sites.

Over their four-year Pharmacy degree, students will also take on three community engagement projects that focus on public health, underprivileged groups and indigenous communities as initiatives that seek to stem the tide of diabetes.

UCSI University is ranked in the world’s top 1% in the QS World University Rankings 2025 by virtue of its top 265 ranking. It stands out as one of Asia’s top private universities in the competitive annual exercise.

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