The 2014 Teluk Intan parliamentary by-election in Malaysia

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Abstract: Democracy, by definition, is fit to be perceived as the equality of political right. The 2014 Teluk Intan parliamentary by-election contributed towards improving the indicator of democracy. This by-election also witnessed a direct contest between GERAKAN, one of BN component parties, and DAP, a member of the opposition PR coalitions. This paper analyses that this by-election had posed serious formidable challenges for both competing parties. It also looks at the campaign strategies and issues during the ongoing campaign sessions. The result, however, did not reflect the expectations held by the DAP, as it thought that it could maintain the present status quo. The study concluded that, instead of achieving electoral victory, DAP was caught in its internal unexpected crisis, irrespective of the PR coalition members, and, thus, failed to retain its former seat within the context of parliamentary democracy.

Keywords: Pakatan Rakyat, by-election, Teluk Intan, Barisan Nasional, Malaysia

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Introduction

A by-election is usually held whenever a seat is declared vacant due to certain inevitable reasons such as death, constitutional disqualification and many more. For Muhammad A. Hakim, a by-election is often treated as a barometer for testing an incumbent government’s degree of popularity, especially in a democratic parliamentary system.¹ Within Malaysia’s political terrain, the conduct of elections has always been a source of struggle between the competing political parties, especially in the post-2008 general elections, where it had witnessed the tremendous shift of votes from the dominant ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) to a unified opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR), consisting of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) and Democratic Action Party (DAP). The same episode was repeated again in the 2013 general elections, proving that the opposition, PR, could maintain their electoral grip even though they did not get the two-thirds majority in the Parliament. The by-election was called soon after Seah Long Peng, Teluk Intan Member of Parliament (MP) from the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP), died of cancer. That same month, the state of Perak had witnessed its first by-election after the sensational May 2013 general election took place. The Teluk Intan by-election was the fourth by-election held since the general elections and it revealed a direct contest between the opposition Pakatan Rakyat’s (People’s Coalition / PR)

component party, the Democratic Action Party (DAP), on the one hand, and, on the other, the Barisan Nasional (National Front / BN) component party, Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysia People’s Movement Party / GERAKAN). The purpose of this paper is to analyze the 2014 Teluk Intan by-election for the Parliament of Malaysia, held on May 31. The ruling BN was almost electorally wiped out from Malaysia’s politics when it achieved catastrophic results in two consecutive general elections (2008-2013).

The Teluk Intan By-Election

Malaysia practices parliamentary democracy as part of its political system. It consists of thirteen different states and Teluk Intan is a parliamentary constituency situated in the Malaysia’s state of Perak. Perak’s politics had been robustly dominated by the ruling BN government for a very long time, as recorded by any academic research. After the 2008 general elections concluded, a remarkable change in the nomenclature of Malaysian politics occurred, where the state of Perak fell into the hands of the opposition coalition, PR. The 2008 elections marked the end of the ruling government BN’s dominance within an embedded milieu of Malaysia’s political setting. Even though BN, as the most dominant coalition, had proven successful, based on its remarkable performance in the 2004 general elections, provided with its own sound electoral machineries utilized during the previous elections held, it was still vulnerable and could be defeated in terms of seats contested. BN unexpectedly secured the 2008 general elections by an uncanny reduced majority. The results indicated that the BN slightly grabbed
133 out of 222 parliamentary seats, while the opposition coalition PR managed to garner a surprised total of 89 out of 222 parliamentary seats, compared to their electoral performance before the 2008 general elections.

As observed by a political scientist, the outcome of 2008 general elections was perfectly referred to as a “political tsunami”. The reason behind the profound vista was that democracy was finally tested and survived, even though the opposition coalition PR did not fully capture the total of contested seats at the parliamentary level. The 2008 elections results indicated that the legitimacy of the ruling BN government was truly challenged. The situation somehow gave opportunities for the opposition-controlled states to amend or to approve any incoming constitutional amendments. The opposition coalition was actually formed when the top three opposition political parties, namely the DAP, PKR and PAS came to some sort of understanding by forming a political alliance known as Pakatan Rakyat (People’s Alliance) (PR) on 1 April 2008.

As for the state of Perak, one of PR controlled-states, this was the only state that triggered a political crisis. The crisis was politically engineered and announced, on February 4, 2009, by Najib Tun Razak, then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and it took place two months before Najib became the Prime Minister. Three PR state assemblymen - Hee Yit Foong (Jelapang / DAP), Jamaluddin Mohd Radzi (Behrang / PKR), and Mohd Osman Jailu

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(Changkat Jering / PKR) - turned their back on BN and it resulted in a lack of numbers for PR to command the majority in the Perak’s state legislative assembly or (Dewan Undangan Negeri / DUN). The Perak state government had to deal with a total of 28 out of 59 seats in DUN.

As a result of this sudden defection, the current PR Menteri Besar (Chief Minister / MB) Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin immediately responded to this situation of political anathema by approaching the monarch of Perak, Sultan Azlan Shah, to have the state assemblies dissolved in order to organize a snap election, but the Sultan went against the wish of PR. Even worse, Nizar’s and the rest of his state cabinet were called to resign due to the insufficient majority in the DUN. In the middle of the crisis, the opportunity was immediately grabbed by the ruling BN government, where Najib and all 31 BN state assemblymen had a meeting with the Sultan. The meeting yielded an unremarkable result for the PR led-government when the Sultan appointed Zambry Abdul Kadir, BN assemblyman, for the state constituency of Pangkor, to lead a new line up the ruling BN state government.⁴

Electoral Constituencies in the State of Perak

Electorally, the state of Perak has 24 parliamentary seats and 59 seats in DUN. Since the 2013 general elections, the ruling BN government dominated almost all parliamentary seats in the state of Perak. At DUN level, the dominance of ruling BN government had the same grip and it captured almost all state seats. Teluk Intan is a parliamentary constituency and it is comprised of two state constituencies: N55 Pasir Bedemar and N56 Changkat Jong. The Teluk Intan parliamentary seat has been under the grip of PR (DAP) twice since the 2008 and 2013 general elections with different
candidates having contested it. In 2008, M. Manogaran from DAP managed to win the seat over from BN (GERAKAN) candidate, Mah Siew Keong, who is currently a president for the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GERAKAN). In 2013, another DAP candidate, Seah Leong Peng kept the seat by defeating the same candidate from BN (GERAKAN), Mah Siew Keong. In terms of eligible voters, the Teluk Intan parliamentary constituency has interestingly recorded that it has the highest number of woman voters (31,049) compared to men, (29,300).\(^5\) According to the Chairman of Election Commission (EC), Tan Sri Abdul Aziz, in terms of racial breakdown, Chinese voters recorded the highest number - 25,310 voters in total. The Malay positioned themselves as the second largest group, with 23,301 voters, and the Indians recorded the smallest number compared to Chinese and Malay, namely 11,468.\(^6\) The ethnic distribution of votes was something that should have been given strong attention, especially when the 2013 general elections saw “Chinese” voters as a robust factor that led towards a reduced majority, hard-won by the ruling BN government. Teluk Intan had its own electoral significance due to a number of reasons. First, the ruling BN failed twice to secure this seat in the 2008 and 2013 general elections. Therefore, it appeared that the ruling BN had to wrestle back the seat from the opposition DAP. Secondly, the seat had helped the DAP in maintaining their status quo consecutively for two terms (2008 and 2013


elections); the by-election was an important electoral strategy for them to keep their seats in Parliament.

The Candidates: Unintended Certainties

The EC announced that the nomination of candidates would take place on May 19. The announcement made by the EC attracted several possible candidates from parties intended to contest in the above-mentioned by-election. The announcement had caught the undivided attention of Perak DAP. Nga Kor Ming, Chairman of Perak DAP, said that the candidate would be revealed by Lim Guan Eng, the DAP secretary general after the Bukit Gelugor by-election nomination day. DAP, under the banner of PR, came to some sort of understanding and, together with PKR and PAS, plotting to organize a mammoth rally on May 18, which was the eve of nomination date, in order to make the possible candidate well-known to the people as part of PR strategies to gather the crowd, making it more identifiable to the mass.

This by-election had set forth an open door for both sides, the ruling BN government and the opposition PR, particularly the DAP party, to fulfill the constitutional demand throughout the contestation of the above-mentioned by-election. The Teluk Intan parliamentary seat was known as the DAP stronghold since the 2008 general election and DAP succeeded in maintaining the seat twice in 2008 and 2013 by putting forth different

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candidates from DAP. At the onset, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), one of the BN component parties, did not intend to contest out of respect and, at the same time, they paved a way for GERAKAN to set an electoral footing in the Teluk Intan parliamentary constituency.\(^8\) The battle over the parliamentary constituency was inevitable and the most crucial part was the BN (GERAKAN). GERAKAN had lost twice since 2008 and this by-election, organized on reasonable grounds, was a genuine possibility to redeem what had been lost for all this time. This battle truly reflects the philosophy of redeeming the lost honor.

As for the opposition PR (DAP), they became more aware, realizing that effort needed to be poured in order to defend the twice-won seat. It was reported initially that the party’s internal circulation suggested that a young candidate be fielded in the by-election.\(^9\) However, there were some speculated names: former Jalong assemblywoman Leong Mee Meng, DAP supremo leader Lim Kit Siang’s political secretary Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud, DAP member Hew Kuan Yau and one of Nga’s aides, Chong Zhe Min.\(^10\) Another speculation suggested that Dyana may be put forth as the candidate. Lim Kit Siang was asked regarding the confirmation of the candidature, to which he remained silent. It was publicly known that those who affiliated with Lim Kit Siang, either his political secretary or his aides, were all

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\(^10\) Ibidem.
elevated to become people’s representatives (*wakil rakyat*), including Selangor’s senior executive official (EXCO) Datuk Teng Chang Kim, Penang’s EXCO Chow Kon Yeow, Members of Parliament (MPs) from Seputeh and Batu Kawan, Teresa Kok and Kashturiraani Patto.\(^{11}\)

Before the candidature announcement was made, DAP had a minor internal crisis that slightly affected its electoral plan. On May 15, several NGOs staged a rally demanding that DAP top officials allow M. Manogaran to contest in the respective by-election.\(^{12}\) Manogaran used to be an MP for Teluk Intan, as a result of the 2008 general election. But the service offered by Manogaran did not last long and, up until the 2013 general election, he was transferred by top officials to contest the parliamentary seat of Cameron Highland in the state of Pahang. Unfortunately, Manogaran lost in the general elections to the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) candidate, Palanivel Govindasamy. The NGOs, represented by National Indian Action Team (NIAT) chairman Thasleem Mohamed Ibrahim, made a bold statement by declaring that Teluk Intan residents wanted Manogaran back and that he himself was quite impressed with Manogaran’s services from 2008 until 2013.\(^{13}\)


\(^{13}\) *Ibidem.*
NGO leader and also the co-founder of the Group of Concerned Citizen movement. Arumugam came to some sort of belief that Manogaran should properly be positioned at the parliamentary level again. The issues on the Teluk Intan candidature continued to be tensely debated. This time, Manogaran received support from the Tamil Progressive Front (TPF), under the leadership of A. Kalaimugilan. DAP was reminded thoroughly by TPF leader of Manogaran’s loyalty and sacrifice, especially when DAP made an important decision by choosing Manogaran to contest against Palanivel for the parliamentary seat of Cameron Highland.

On the eve of the announcement, another political interference made an unexpected inroad. Another party, known as Barisan Jemaah Islamiyah SeMalaysia (BERJASA), came out of nowhere demanding to field a candidate in the by-election. The current president, Mohd Yusuf Harun, said that a meeting would be held in Kuala Lumpur to decide their respective candidate for the by-election.

On May 17, the conundrum over the candidature was finally put to end. Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, the Deputy Prime Minister, announced the President of GERAKAN, Mah Siew Kong, as BN candidate for the Teluk Intan by-election. On the other hand, Lim Guan Eng, General-Secretary of DAP, publicly proclaimed Dyana Sofya as candidate. Removing the ostensible remarks, this was clearly a straight fight between BN (GERAKAN) and PR (DAP). Since its tremendous lost in 2008, BN had long awaited this electoral opportunity and it paved a the way for them to

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grab what was owned to them before 2008. Thus, it was truly seen as an opportunity for BN to topple down the PR by constitutional means. As for PR, especially DAP, they took this political electoral milieu as an inevitable surprise, since they had no other way around except to react from a “defensive” position. For almost a term, PR had been a sound alternative for the people to gain some fruitful advantages by having them as the lead-representatives, yet the situation did not go well as it intended.

The BN candidate’s profile seemed to be more firm and fit compared to PR candidate. Mah Siew Kong, a party president for GERAKAN, who holds a Bachelor of Law degree, had written his own political track record. A local Teluk Intan resident by birth, Mah had served the constituency from 1999 until 2008 when he lost to the former DAP candidate, Manogaran.\textsuperscript{15} Based on numerous records as a well-experienced politician, Mah’s resume was truly incomparable at the very least as a Teluk Intan by-election candidate. Meanwhile, the DAP candidate, Dyana Sofya, a Law graduate from one of local institutions, began her political career when she joined DAP in 2012 and, at the same time, assisted the party’s campaign under Lim Kit Siang when Lim was the candidate for the Gelang Patah parliamentary constituency during the 2013 general election. After Lim won the constituency, Dyana was introduced as his political secretary. Lim himself

admitted that DAP would be facing a big challenge and, at the same time was confident that Dyana would win the by-election.16

**Electoral Campaign and Issues**

This by-election was a political test for the BN (GERAKAN), as well as for PR (DAP). The electoral campaign began soon after the nomination of candidates took place. Lim Kit Siang, on behalf of DAP, claimed that the party really took an audacious gamble making Dyana, his political secretary, the DAP candidate in the by-election.17 The BN (GERAKAN), in the early days of campaigning, made political promises, stating that Teluk Intan parliamentary constituency will be seized from PR (DAP). Mah also thanked the Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak for giving him this golden opportunity to contest on behalf of the BN.

The onset of this by-election was characterized and perceived as psychological warfare. DAP’s candidate Dyana was first under attack psychologically when Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, UMNO’s woman chief, taunted Dyana’s credibility to become the Teluk Intan MP. Dyana was seriously accused to be DAP’s puppet and “cosmetic instrument”.18 In countering this serious political accusation, Lim Guan Eng backed Dyana’s candidature,

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stating that Shahrizat’s statement was only meant to demoralize women, intending to persuade them not to participate in politics. Not only that, Dyana urged Shahrizat to learn from her mother. Surprisingly, Dyana’s mother Yammy Samat is currently a member of the UMNO.\(^{19}\) Generally, this by-election seemed to be “rare”. Yammy openly gave support to her daughter during the candidacy announcement, even though it was widely known to the public that both he daughter and mother were from different political parties; still, biological relationship dominated the dichotomy, irrespective of the two competing parties.

Another UMNO member, Datuk Ahmad Maslan, in tandem with Shahrizat’s accusation, put forth a bold remark, claiming that DAP’s choice of candidate was obviously a “mind trap” for the voters.\(^{20}\) Ahmad further argued that DAP opted not only for a Malay candidate, but a candidate who was still green in politics and contributed nothing in terms of services to the folks of Teluk Intan. Using this line of thought, Ahmad was pretty confident that BN could retake the constituency by retracing the services that Mah had given when he used to be MP. The growing psychological heat increased and this time it was supported by UMNO’s official news Utusan Malaysia editor reasoned that DAP always resorted to the strategy of “manipulation” to cheat the Malay people, hoping to create the image that it was always a multi-racial

The word “manipulation” here implies the DAP’s process of candidate selection targeted Dyana, a Malay by ethnicity. Based on external predictions, political analysts saw DAP’s option of fielding Malay candidate as something different. Ibrahim Suffian, an executive director from the Merdeka Center, stated that DAP is trying to change its Chinese party image and, at the same time, trying to slowly gain the hearts and minds of Malays by fielding a Malay candidate. It was quite a serious attempt made by DAP and not the first time ethnic representation was debated. DAP, at the very least, has two Malay MPs - Zairil Khir Johari and Datuk Ariff Sabri - MPs for the Bukit Bendera and Raub constituencies and both of them represented Chinese-majority seats. Dr. Jayum Anak Jawan, a local-based political scientist, opined that the main convergent in this by-election was young Malay professional groups because they are more susceptible towards accepting change and that the arduous task is to influence old Malays. Pointing out that having Dyana as a Malay candidate was indeed the best strategy for DAP to attract more young supporters. As stated by DAP publicity Chief Tony Pua, having Dyana as a candidate was an “investment”. In line with his statement, Pua meant that a Malay candidate

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like Dyana could cure the poison cast on DAP’s image as Chinese-based party and that DAP, at the same time, appealed to voters by urging them to create a historical moment: voting for DAP in order to break the racial circumvention.

The main agenda was outlined by DAP during the campaigning session and it highlighted racial solidarity. Besides that, attention was given to issues concerning youth participation and women. On top of that, in her statement, Dyana vowed to oppose any efforts made to table or to implement Islamic law of hudud at parliamentary level. Even though she did not fully oppose the hudud, she reasoned that its implementation would not be carried out until and unless the socio-economic imbalances are to be fixed first. The Islamic law of hudud was the most critical component within PR circulation. PAS, an Islamic-based party, had been championing the cause and issue of its implementation at parliamentary and as well at state level. Deriving from this internal crackdown would have allowed more gaps available for PR’s party members. However, PAS’ response was a bit surprising. Salahuddin Ayub, PAS vice-president, openly proclaimed the party’s support for Dyana, despite her statement on hudud against the basic struggle of PAS. Salahuddin further stated that hudud will not be a major issue towards a mutual understanding within PR, especially in this by-election. MCA, on the

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other hand, as a Chinese-dominated party within BN coalition, pressured the DAP particularly on the issues of *hudud*.\(^{27}\)

Compared to DAP, MCA held the strictest stance on *hudud* within the BN coalition. Whenever there was any debate on *hudud*, MCA stood as the most vocal critics of its implementation. Therefore, *hudud* served as a mutual cause of dislike for both DAP and MCA. Bringing *hudud* into the discourse of Malaysia within the framework of a pluralistic society was not something that easily achieved. Since 1993, when PAS first tabled its implementation plan at the state level of Kelantan, it had triggered inevitable dissenting voices that could disrupt the opposition’s political stability. At the time, DAP was stuck in the middle between protecting its PR relationship or sticking to its party principles. Seizing this ample opportunity, Datuk Ti Lian Ker, chairman of the MCA religious affairs and harmony bureau, stood up against DAP, claiming that it had failed to stop PAS abandon the enforcement of its *hudud* plan in Kelantan. In the midst of unsettled disputes (*hudud*), Fathul Bari Mat Jahya, young ulama’ of UMNO, boldly stated that both DAP and GERAKAN brought harm because they openly said no to the implementation of *hudud*.\(^{28}\) Speaking on *hudud*, Fathul opined that voters should choose the lesser evil. DAP and GERAKAN were both against the implementation of *hudud* in the country. Mah in his campaign warned the voters that there would


be no turning back if PAS’ hudud was to be implemented in the country.\textsuperscript{29} If truly implemented in Kelantan, other states will have the proclivity to follow, according to him. As meant by Fathul, the point stated was to be more careful in choosing the representative. PAS’ statement on hudud was brought up and questioned when they gave open support to DAP. The ongoing issue on hudud kept echoed and this time, the PAS Dewan Ulama (Council of Religious Scholars), its acting chief Datuk Ahmad Yakub, who was also a Kelantan MP, admonished the DAP candidate and said that she must know her limits when talking about hudud.\textsuperscript{30} Even though PAS was part of PR, during the campaign, it excluded the agenda of implementing the hudud law. Quoting from its party’s constitution, Ahmad Yakub clarified that the enforcement of laws based on Islamic tenets was clearly embedded in Clause 5 (1) of the PAS constitution. This internal dispute was once again brought forth. Muhyiddin called for both DAP and PAS to explain their positions to each other and not to blindside the voters.\textsuperscript{31} They (DAP and PAS) were confusing the public with the parties’ different stands on the hudud plan for Kelantan. As the debate was getting heated, there was a possibility for PR to

\textsuperscript{29} ***, “Teluk Intan by-election: No turning back if PAS’ hudud is implemented, says Mah”, \textit{The Star Online}, 20 May 2014, available at www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/05/20/Teluk-Intan-byelection-Mah-on-hudud/, accessed on 2 October 2014.


get trapped in the conundrum of *hudud*. PAS President, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, clearly stated where PAS stood on the issues that constrained their relations with DAP. Abdul Hadi maintained that PAS is working together with DAP as a token of gratitude for standing by their side when the Kelantan government fell in 1978.\textsuperscript{32} The past historical crisis was considered by PAS a point of reference to give supports to DAP candidate in the by-election.

Realizing that DAP was engaged in a very energetic campaign, UMNO resorted to a strategy more or less psychologically-based. Datuk Mustapha Yaakub, UMNO NGO veteran, called for Yammy’s resignation from UMNO.\textsuperscript{33} Mustapha was strongly addressing his concerns, calling for Yammy to be stripped of her membership from UMNO because of her public appearance associated with her daughter during the campaign period. As Yammy herself stated, she would not abandon her daughter in the by-election campaigns, even though her daughter contested under the DAP ticket.\textsuperscript{34} Yammy attempted to clarify that her daughter was a DAP candidate but her relationship with the rest of UMNO members remained as usual.

From a racial perspective, having Dyana as a DAP candidate had attracted some inevitable critics. Due to those abnormal circumstances, Tun


Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the longest serving prime minister in Malaysia, vocalized his dissent. The action of DAP putting forth a Malay candidate was only ‘hiasan luaran’ (external decoration), the reason being to keep Malays from becoming blurred and ambiguous. Mahathir added his disappointment towards the DAP candidate as she was originally from the UMNO family. Lim Kit Siang came to refute Mahathir’s statement by stating that Mahathir was the one who deceived Malays for almost 22 years during his tenure as PM. Adding to this source of tension, through its vessel Dyana, DAP has openly called for public educational institution Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) to open its membership to non-Bumiputera, similar to what Dato’ Onn did when he urged UMNO to open its membership to non-Malays. DAP was strongly criticized and associated with its questioning of Malay special rights within the root of Constitution. In response to Dyana’s statement, Tan Sri Dr. Abdul Rahman Arshad, UiTM pro chancellor, defended UiTM as an institution that provided education to the Malays at the highest level. Quoting from Article 153 of the Malaysian Constitution, in regards to the special right of Malays, Abdul Rahman mentioned that if UiTM’s membership is open to all, it inclines to lose its special status.


During the midst of campaigning, BN was found to have conducted their campaigns in schools. It was confirmed that the EC had granted permission to the Teluk Intan UMNO and allowed them to do so because there was no other place suited to conducting campaigns. They were aware that regulations dictated that places like schools are off-limits for campaigning, but BN did regardless. In response to this, Tony Pua, on behalf of DAP, requested that the same facilities be granted to the party for the campaign purposes. In justifying the action, Ahmad Maslan came to defend BN, stating that there was nothing wrong in using schools as part of the electoral campaign. The argument offered was that schools are government assets and that using schools as part of campaigning process was in tandem with regulations set by the EC.

Speaking on the issues of material development, the ruling BN has been championing the cause in each of the elections occurred at the parliamentary and state level. With power and money at the level of the ruling government, it seemed easy to grab the voters’ attention undividedly. This by-election also witnessed the aggressiveness of BN in offering material things in order to keep the voters preoccupied. Considered a golden opportunity for Teluk Intan folks, at the very least the by-election held in the constituency had opened up a new phase of material development. The ruling BN, in their manifesto, aiming for development, revealed that they would set up a new university in Teluk Intan if their sole candidate secured the by-

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election.³⁸ Adding to that, BN politically offered to direct their electoral efforts towards having the *menara condong* (lean tower) Teluk Intan, the famous lean tower in Perak, listed under the world heritage site of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - ostensibly, something to which DAP could not afford to commit.

On the very last day of campaign, thousands attended a *ceramah* (political sermon) organized by DAP at Teluk Intan city,³⁹ making the final appeal to voters. Anthony Loke, MP for Seremban parliamentary constituency, appealed to all people who attended to vote for the DAP.

**The Result**

On May 31, the official result of the Teluk Intan by-election revealed that the ruling BN government, with its candidate Mah Siew Keong from GERAKAN, won the by-election. As shown in Figure 2. Mah’s defeated PR candidate, Dyana Sofya, from DAP with a slim-majority of 238 votes, pointing to the electoral facts the Teluk Intan voters favored upon BN’s candidate. Mah’s managed to secure at least 20,157 total of votes and Dyana obtained only 19,919 total of votes (see Figure 2).

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According to the Election Commission (EC), the total of eligible voters was 60,483. The number of people who cast ballots amounted to 40,236, equal to 67.4%. In terms of spoilt votes, the number recorded was 543 in total. The result told a completely different story. Compared to the previous general elections in 2008 and 2013, where DAP could maintain its candidate consecutively for two terms, when Teluk Intan suddenly called for a by-election, the result yielded totally against the logic of maintaining the seat. In 2008, Mah contested in the Teluk Intan parliamentary constituency and was defeated with a majority of 1,470 votes; in 2013 when Mah once again contested in the same constituency, he was defeated with an increased majority of 7,313 of total votes. Looking at Mah’s performance in the previous two elections, 2008 and 2013, there was a steady increase in terms of votes. In 2008, Mah secured at least 17,016 total of votes, whereas in 2013, Mah obtained 20,086 votes. This demonstrates a steady increase in terms of
votes secured by Mah (see Table 1). In the 2014 Teluk Intan by-election, Mah once again recorded an increased number of votes by obtaining 20,157 in total.

On the other hand, DAP candidates recorded a remarkable number of votes obtained in 2008 and 2013. Even though different candidates contested in the elections, DAP could retain the Teluk Intan constituency for two consecutive terms. In 2008, M. Manogaran from DAP, defeated BN with a sizeable number of votes - 1,470 in total. In 2013, with a different candidate, Seah Leong Peng, DAP maintained the constituency by defeating the BN candidate with a majority of 7,313 votes. Seah marked the biggest number of votes ever obtained by DAP for the past two terms.
Table 1: The 2008 and 2013 Teluk Intan Parliamentary Elections Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>DAP Seah Leong Peng</td>
<td>27,399 (7,313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MCA Mah Siew Keong</td>
<td>20,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IND Moraliningam A/L Kannan</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>DAP M. Manogaran</td>
<td>18,486 (1,470)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gerakan Mah Siew Keong</td>
<td>17,016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The result, however, was portrayed in different ways and it crucially marked the disappointment of DAP, as it did not conform with the past two elections, where DAP has secured the seat. DAP’s reduced numbers were significant: the 2013 elections recorded that DAP won with a majority of 27,399 total of votes but in the 2014 by-election, DAP could only gather 19,919 votes; the difference amounted to 7,480.

As the electoral event passed, Lim Guan Eng, in his statement, concluded that the reduction of Chinese voters towards DAP could be the
reason for putting forth Dyana as the Malay candidate.\textsuperscript{40} Lim indeed believed that the reduction of 10\% occurred. The underlying interpretation of the reduction may have its roots based on racial statistics in the constituency. Chinese voters recorded the highest number which is (25,310), followed by Malays (23,301) and Indians (11,468). According to DAP director of strategy Dr. Ong Kian Ming, Malay votes towards DAP comprised 3\% only.\textsuperscript{41} Unfortunately, supports gained from the Chinese community, which traditionally opts for DAP, decreased around 15\% and a similar phenomenon was registered with Indian voters, where it decreased around 10\%.

Alternatively, political analysts saw the defeat of DAP in a different light. Dr. Oh Ei Sun, from the Rajaratnam School of International Studies Singapore, believed that the percentage of voters decreased due to DAP’s over-confidence in winning the by-election, but unfortunately it went south.\textsuperscript{42} Oh further added that the defeat of DAP was due to BN’s robust electoral machinery. Dr. James Chin, political analyst from Monash University Malaysian campus, in his statement on the unexpected defeat of DAP, was of the opinion that there must be some valid grounds for the voters living outside Teluk Intan to get back to their hometown for the purposes of casting a vote, but in this by-election, voters failed to do so. Meaning to say that, the situation represented by this by-election may not be same as the situation in

general elections, because voters do know that general elections require a change in government. By this logic, voters simply do not take the by-election seriously, as it only consists in changing a sole parliamentary representative, but not the whole government, including federal and state.

Other analysts made their own stand. Dr. Arnold Puyok from the Malaysia University of Sarawak (UNIMAS), came to the conclusion that DAP put too much focus on its candidate Dyana at the expense of local issues, which contributed to people’s anxiety. Party member statements revealed that the issue of *hudud* played a major role in the unexpected defeat.43 Gobind Singh Deo, MP for Puchong constituency, stated that the plan of implementing the *hudud* proposed by a coalition in PR, PAS, was regarded as a factor which led to DAP’s failure in retaining the by-election. The issue of *hudud* as the main contributing factor may need to be revisited. A study conducted by Dr. Ngreng Miang Hong from UCSI Poll Research Center found that 12% of Chinese voter respondents cared about the issue of implementing the *hudud* law introduced by Kelantan state government.

**Conclusion**

The 2014 Teluk Intan parliamentary by-election ended the inevitable uncertainties held by both competing parties and, at the same time, it marked a new dawn for the DAP, a component party of the opposition PR. DAP’s

defeat in the said by-election was caused by several reasons, that had not been given attention they required. The ruling BN, through GERAKAN, succeeded in retaking the seat from DAP, but it won only with a slight majority. As for DAP, compared to its previous electoral attempts, it could have performed better, but the issue was the ethnic candidate that haunted the electoral formula. Internal differences which occurred between the component parties of the opposition PR were centered on the idea of mutual cooperation when it came to issues like the implementation of *hudud*; some had opted to be in favour of the policy, while some had opted to object, which created instability under the embedded framework agreed upon together. Even though the respective by-election did not incur major of political change within the framework of Malaysia’s political system compared to previous general elections, at the parliamentary level it caused a minor decrease in the numbers of the opposition.

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