



**Cent-GPS**

Centre for Governance  
and Political Studies



INITIAL COMPARATIVE  
ANALYSIS IN  
**3 BY-ELECTIONS**

# INITIAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN 3 BY-ELECTIONS

## INTRODUCTION

As a follow up of our previous analysis of the Sungai Kandis by-election in gauging the general strategy of Barisan Nasional (BN), playing over the Malay-Islamic political narrative with the open alliance with PAS, we now get a glimpse of how it may work in various settings, rendering to the Seri Setia and Balakong by - elections.

This is a good opportunity to analyze the effectiveness of the opposition's new, post GE-14 strategy. The samples we have are similar to Sungai Kandis, both Balakong and Seri Setia constituencies are located within the state of Selangor. We also get to dive into how this strategy plays out with different profiles of candidates, different circumstances leading up to the vote and different national sentiments as a context to the eve of the vote.

It is crucial, first of all, to note that the voter turnout for all 3 by-elections are lower (hovering around 44%) in comparison to the record high turnout during GE14. This is a vital determinant for the final results of these by-elections, frankly, the near 50% drop in voter turnout may even be a pretense for false hope even if UMNO and PAS received more votes, ie, the 50% of voters who did not vote this time around, may in fact be strong Pakatan Harapan (PH); tired of going to the polls, confident that PH would win, and thus reluctant to spend time waiting in line to vote twice in a year, just for a state seat.

## BACKGROUND OF THE ANALYSIS

Sensing the unhappiness amongst the chinese electorate over the open alliance of PAS and UMNO, MCA decided to go with their own logo as opposed to the standard BN-dacing logo. This decision came with its benefits and consequences. For one, MCA can be seen to be drawing a line between the infamously corrupt ridden UMNO, an image bound to lower MCA's voter reception. But as a consequence, MCA is perceived as abandoning ship, telling voters that the cooperation amongst different races on the BN stage, is now defunct.

PAS on the other hand, are slowly becoming the party to be (at least in the opposition). They are getting open endorsements from key UMNO leaders, with the appearance and campaigning by senior UMNO office bearers. In a glance, it often almost seems like the UMNO leaders are serving the PAS leadership more than vice-verca. Despite the UMNO candidate of the recent Sungai Kandis by-election donning a specially made outfit for the UMNO-PAS alliance during the nomination day, our reports on the ground suggest that PAS's machinery are not as enthusiastic to work with UMNO, as the UMNO machinery is to work with PAS.

It is clear for Seri Setia, the opposition pact is promoting and selling hard, the narrative of a united Malay-Islam 'ummah'. In Balakong, the opposition pact are trying to run a campaign far away from this narrative.

Note that we use the word opposition pact for Balakong, as we consider MCA to be part of the pact with PAS, since every party has agreed that a 3-cornered fight is to be avoided and a gentlemen agreement is made for PAS not to put forth any candidate in Balakong.

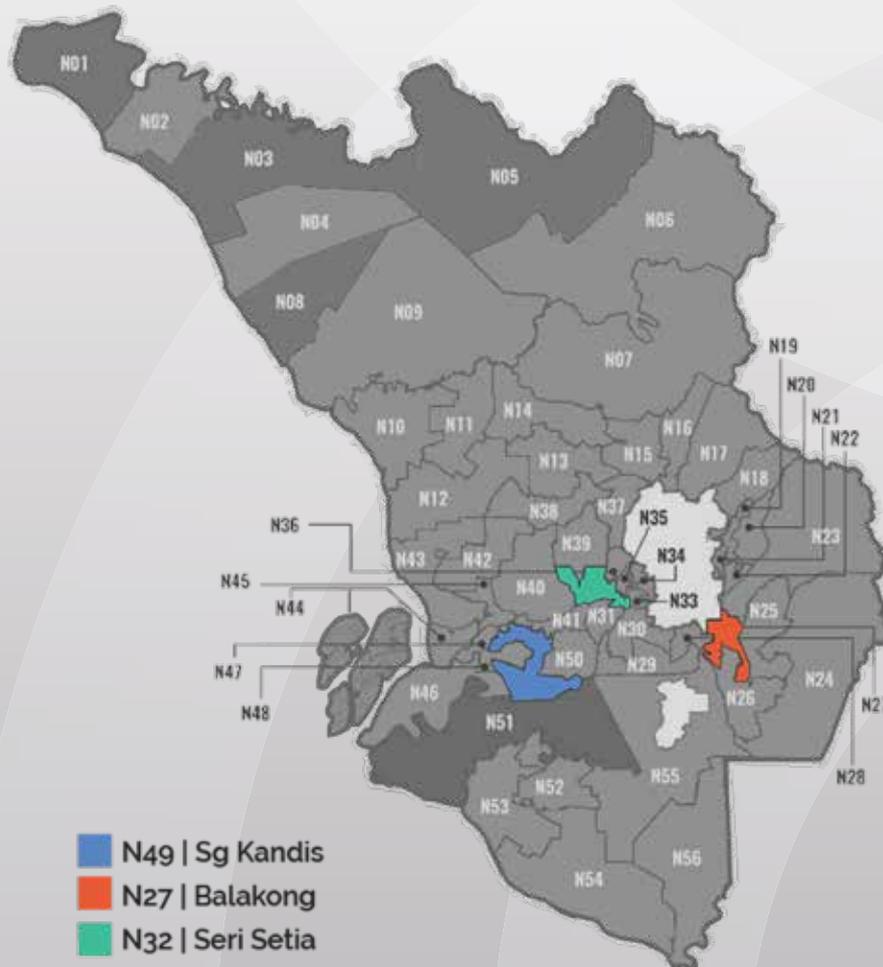
# OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to simply look at how the general strategy employed by both PAS and MCA worked to retain, increase or lower votes in comparison to GE14. We dive deep into analyzing, numerically, how the proportion of votes in these by-elections are an indicator for whether the PAS and UMNO relationship is beneficial.

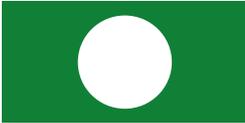
Subsequently, we'll look at the final outcome of the Sungai Kandis and Seri Setia by-election, as both adopted a similar narrative, however with different candidates from different parties.

# GENERAL STRATEGY

SERI SETIA	BALAKONG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamic-Malay centric campaign</li> <li>• UMNO and PAS leaders showing support openly</li> <li>• Malay-Islamic based issues were brought up by the candidate</li> <li>• UMNO and PAS campaigns highlighting failures of current government ministries such as the Minister of Education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MCA to "reform, walk its own path and walk the path of the people" in tandem after the GE14 defeat.</li> <li>• Narrative for an effective opposition as check and balance to the Harapan government</li> <li>• Absence of any PAS leaders during nomination day.</li> </ul>



## PROFILE OF CANDIDATES



**DR. HALIMAH ALI**  
Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)

- Certified medical doctor
- PAS's Central Committee Member, Former Selangor State Executive Councillor (ECXO)
- Narrowly lost the Selat Klang seat in the recent GE14



**HALIMEY ABU BAKAR**  
Pakatan Harapan (PKR)

- A Seri Setia local boy and active in PKR since 1999
- Former Petaling Jaya City (MBPJ) councillor
- Contested under the Pakatan Harapan logo, which made its first appearance in an election.

### SERI SETIA BY-ELECTION



**TAN CHEE TEONG**  
Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA)

- Local born of Balakong
- MCA's Serdang committee member
- MCA - a 69-year-old party used its party logo for the first time in this By-Election
- Owner of a hardware store



**WONG SIEW KI**  
Pakatan Harapan (DAP)

- DAP's Serdang Wanita Deputy Chief
- Formed Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) councillor
- Selected as a candidate instead of the ASTRO AEC's broadcast journalist after the strong dissatisfaction among the grassroots.

### BALAKONG BY-ELECTION

# OUTCOME

## RESULTS

### GE14 vs SUNGAI KANDIS BY-ELECTION

	Harapan		BN		PAS		Independent/ PRM		Spoilt		Total Votes
GE 14	23,998	55.21%	11,518	26.50%	7,573	17.42%	76	0.17%	305	0.70%	43,470
PRK	15,472	61.09%	9,585	37.84%	0	0.00%	97	0.38%	173	0.68%	25,327
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-8,526</b>	<b>5.88%</b>	<b>-1,933</b>	<b>11.35%</b>	<b>-7,573</b>	<b>-17.42%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0.21%</b>	<b>-132</b>		<b>-18,143</b>

### GE14 vs BALAKONG BY-ELECTION

	Harapan		MCA		PAS		Independent/ PRM		Spoilt		Total Votes
GE 14	41,768	77.12%	5,874	10.85%	6,230	11.50%	0	0.00%	286	0.53%	54,158
PRK	22,508	84.27%	3,975	14.88%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	227	0.85%	26,710
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-19,260</b>	<b>7.15%</b>	<b>-1,899</b>	<b>4.04%</b>	<b>-6,230</b>	<b>-11.50%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>-59</b>		<b>-27,448</b>

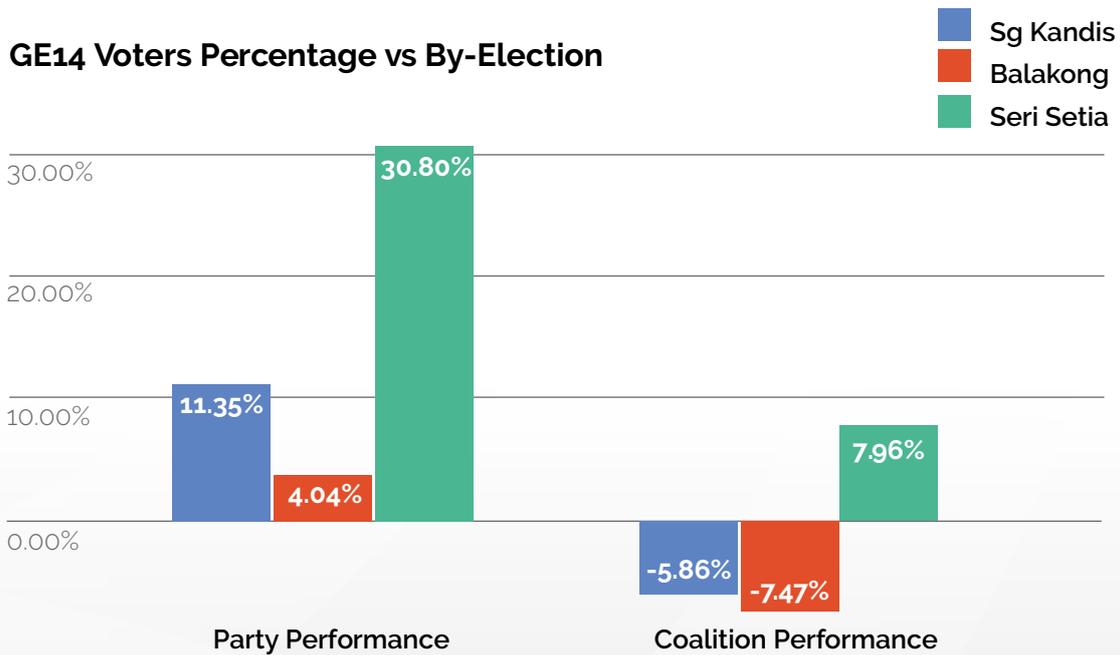
### GE14 vs SERI SETIA BY-ELECTION

	Harapan		BN		PAS		Independent/ PRM		Spoilt		Total Votes
GE 14	29,250	66.16%	9,878	22.34%	4,563	10.32%	217	0.49%	305	0.69%	44,213
PRK	13,725	58.19%	0	0.00%	9,698	41.12%	0	0.00%	164	0.70%	23,587
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-15,525</b>	<b>-7.97%</b>	<b>-9,878</b>	<b>-22.34%</b>	<b>5,135</b>	<b>30.80%</b>	<b>-217</b>	<b>-0.49%</b>	<b>-141</b>		<b>-20,626</b>

In terms of performance, each parties improved their vote shares as opposed to what they obtained in GE14, however, again we must stress that this is after a record low turnout (averaging on 44%) as opposed to the record high turnout (an average 85%) during GE14. Though it is very clear that the opposition benefited from the pact to avoid a 3 cornered fight, the degree of benefit varies greatly from one party to the other with MCA gaining the least benefit while PAS took the biggest advantage.

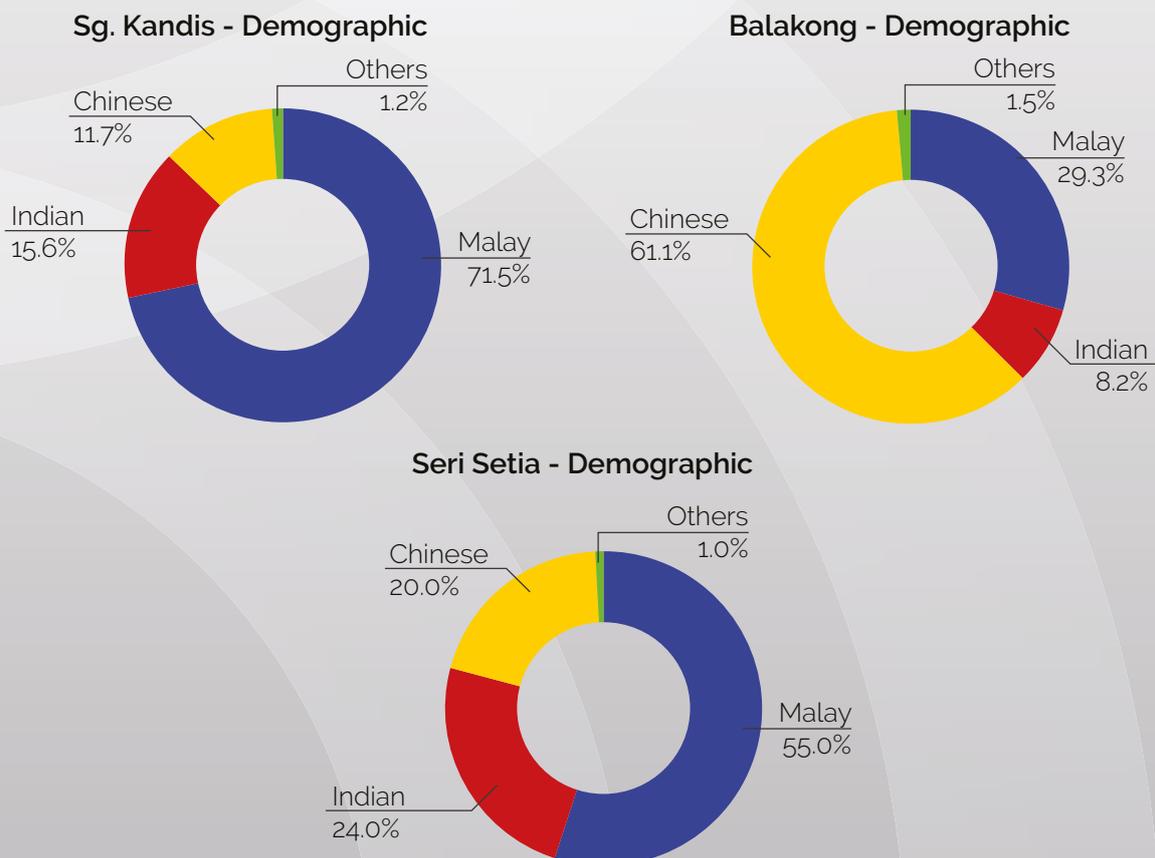
PARTY PERFORMANCE	BN		MCA		PAS	
	Sg Kandis		Balakong		Seri Setia	
GE 14	26.50%		10.85%		10.32%	
By Election	37.84%		14.88%		41.12%	
<b>Difference</b>	<b>11.35%</b>		<b>4.04%</b>		<b>30.80%</b>	

However, for a more accurate view of the performance, it is crucial to look at the share of anti-Harapan votes, which is to see if this pact manages to increase the anti-Harapan votes or at least retain its base (the voters that rejected Harapan in the last GE14), we noticed another pattern emerges.



In terms of the Anti-Harapan bloc, only in Seri Setia did the bloc manage to increase its vote share while for both Balakong and Sungai Kandis, the anti-Harapan bloc shrank. In other words, **where an UMNO candidate was fielded, the PAS and UMNO partnership failed to collect an improved number of votes.**

The idea that an UMNO-PAS partnership may work in places where there is a high percentage of Malay voters is now questioned from these following results.



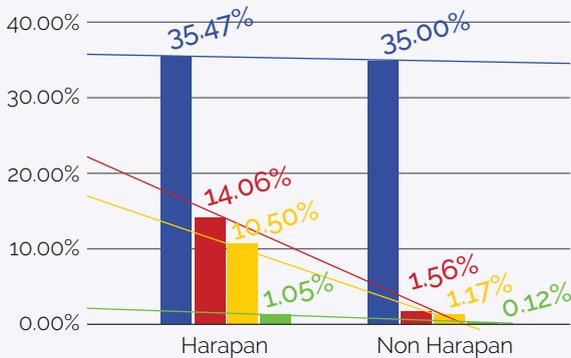
The Malay-Islamic narrative seems to work very well in Seri Setia as opposed to Sungai Kandis. This comes in light of the fact that Seri Setia has a much smaller Malay vote bank as opposed to the latter (Seri Setia 55% vs Sungai Kandis 71.5%). This shows us that PAS is capable of carrying a stronger (perhaps through credibility) campaign than UMNO.

But of course, the entire idea of the so-called unity front by UMNO and PAS is to capture the Malay voting bloc. Here, a simulation is ran to look into whether this is achieved.

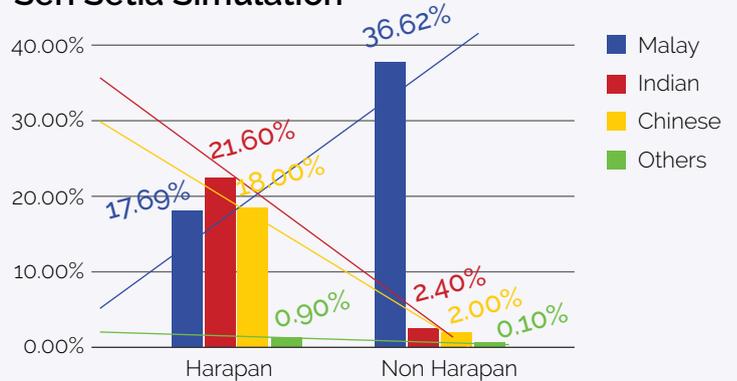
Based on the data collected from the voting districts in Sungai Kandis, we can assume that 9 out of 10 non-Malay voters casted their votes to Harapan. This indicates that BN and PAS (at most) can only secure up to 10% of the non-Malay vote bank.

\*The assumption of the 90/10 distribution does not apply to Balakong as the political narrative is different as compared to Seri Setia and Sungai Kandis.

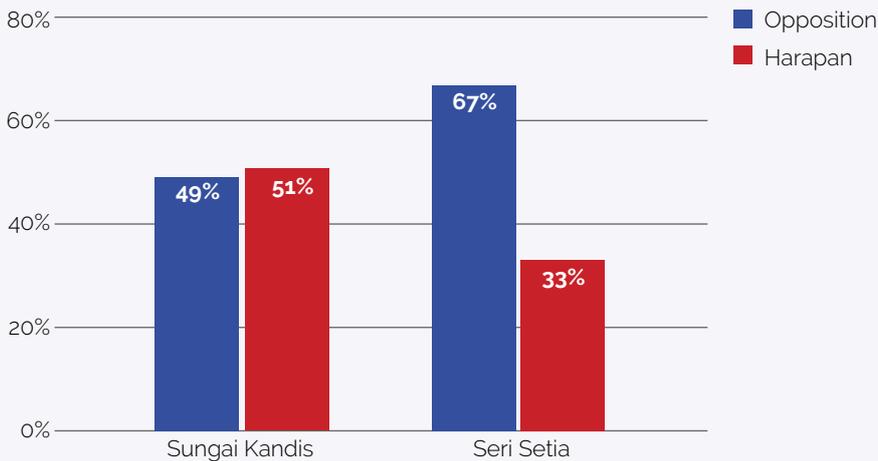
### Sungai Kandis Simulation



### Seri Setia Simulation



### Malay Vote Share

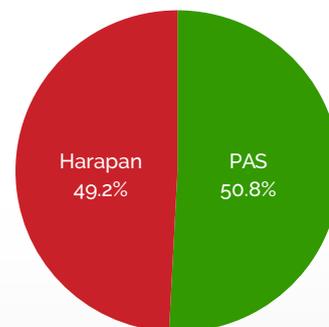


It seems that the effect of the united Malay-Islam front narrative plays very differently from PAS to UMNO as **PAS managed to reap most of the benefits out of that strategy**. From this simulation, for the case of Seri Setia at least, the objective of capturing the Malay votes is achieved with a whopping 67% vote share from the Malay vote bank.

Based on this simulation, if the turnout and voting share is similar to what PAS obtained in Seri Setia, (if PAS is fielded in Sungai Kandis) the results would have been very different.

If PAS contested in Sungai Kandis, the following table produced the projected outcome.

	Demographics	PAS	Harapan
Malay Votes	71.50%	47.91%	23.60%
Non-Malay	28.50%	2.85%	25.65%
<b>Projected</b>		<b>50.76%</b>	<b>49.25%</b>



PAS vs Harapan - Sg Kandis

## CONCLUSION FROM THESE BY-ELECTIONS

The Malay-Islamic narrative seems to be working for PAS, not UMNO. Perhaps it is due to UMNO's now tarnished credibility, or the fact that many of its old leaders are still lingering around. The biggest sign we see from Sungai Kandis and Seri Setia is that PAS is capable of tapping into UMNO's vote bank but UMNO is incapable of doing the same with PAS voters. In other words, **UMNO voters are more likely to switch for PAS as opposed to PAS voters to BN; meaning that the UMNO-PAS partnership is in fact easing the transfer of dominance (as the Malay-go to party) from UMNO to PAS**. Whether the UMNO leaders notice this or not, **their handshake with PAS may in fact spell the end of their own party's relevance in the political landscape as we know it**.

There were major tactical differences from Seri Setia and Sungai Kandis; some of which may have paid off. Primarily, we saw the absence of Najib Razak, Jamal Yunos and other controversial UMNO figures on the campaign front. This benefitted the PAS candidate. Rather interestingly as well, we notice that post by-election, the UMNO leaders were more promotional about their partnership with PAS, pointing to an increase in vote share, whilst PAS leaders seemed more mute about the benefits of the partnership, fueling this perception that UMNO wants this relationship more than PAS does.

MCA may have sparked non-Malay anger and rejection after they shared a campaign stage on the eve of the election, with PAS; reminding voters of the very current relationship between PAS and BN and all the corruption and scandals that come with it.

It is safe to say that PAS holds a larger and strengthening Malay voting bloc than UMNO; and results may differ significantly if voter turnout is higher (in the case of Harapan's victory gap performance).

# POSSIBLE OUTLOOK

After three by-elections, all of which were in state seats, it seems that there is still plenty to do for the newly minted pact between UMNO and PAS.

Strategies of campaigning, events to avoid, personalities to invite are still receiving data points. But all data points seem to point to a cautious conclusion for UMNO. **The once mighty Malay party is now kneeling to PAS, not as a strategic winning strategy, but merely for its own survival.**

**These by-elections are showing us that PAS voters seem quite independent to feel the need to vote for an UMNO candidate.** After all, PAS voters have been taught to vote against UMNO for decades. **In contrast, as we can see in Seri Setia compared to Sungai Kandis, UMNO voters are more likely to jump onto the PAS bandwagon.**

**It is worth repeating here, that the UMNO-PAS partnership, whether UMNO members and leaders notice or not, is in fact aiding the transfer of UMNO voters into PAS. Whether UMNO leaders recognize this or not, their handshake with PAS could spell the end of UMNO's relevance in the political landscape.** The once moderate Malay party and the seemingly right-wing PAS will no longer have a clear ideological distinction between them, and with UMNO overseeing a clear low-morale, with UMNO receiving no confidence from the Malay voters, **this UMNO-PAS partnership could chart the end of the Malay-moderate UMNO platform.**

However, it has to be noted that Seri Setia saw a very different campaign as opposed to Sungai Kandis.

Sungai Kandis featured Lokman Adam, an obnoxiously pro Najib candidate. Najib himself made regular appearances throughout the campaign, coupled this with other controversial figures (Jamal Yunus and Muhammad Azri @ Papagomo) **the opposition campaign in Sungai Kandis were riddled with baggages from the previous government. On the other hand Seri Setia's campaign was more muted, the appearance of UMNO leaders were carefully chosen and controlled** as to not invoke negative nostalgia towards the previous government and the candidate chosen was quite the opposite of that in Sungai Kandis.

**UMNO has lost a significant amount of non Malay support (Only 10% went to UMNO according to our simulations) seeing as how for both Seri Setia and Sungai Kandis, there is a large percentage of Indian voters who are traditionally more acceptable towards BN as oppose to their Chinese counterpart,** this is quite an expensive trade off which has yet to bring much benefit to BN be it in Sungai Kandis or in Balakong

**UMNO's shadow of corruption is still a heavy burden to carry whilst campaigning, one that PAS may wish to live without as it slowly wins over UMNO voters.** With a seemingly inconclusive leadership, the days, months and maybe years ahead will determine UMNO's very existence; **ending the partnership with PAS will mean a likelihood of receiving less votes than PAS in any upcoming by-elections. But continuing the partnership with PAS is a sureway contract for the end of UMNO.**

UMNO is no longer the might it once was, it is on the edge, clinging on to a former rival Islamic- Malay party that can simply chose to let UMNO die its sharp death.

All in all, one thing is for certain amidst all three by-elections, **the Malay vote is divided deeply. Unless the opposition can somehow rally the Malay vote, whether through partnership or perhaps a new deal,** constituencies that hold even slight percentages of non-Malay voters, will likely become impossible seats for the opposition to win.

Moving forward, if this trend does continue, PAS may gain the lead in securing the Malay vote bank and if that does happen, we expect that PAS may end up replacing UMNO in leading the opposition pact. It was not that long ago that PAS held a softer stance as per the era of Nik Aziz, and a softer stance to their issues may in fact see an alliance with MCA and MIC just as how they did with DAP.

We now look to Port Dickson, whether the opposition pact can improve its Malay support, or whether it will take on a less Malay-Islamic narrative and focus on a multicultural, multi-religious campaign. We also must keep an eye on the voter turnout, as **the record low number of voters may in fact be hiding the opposition's real unpopularity.**

For further detailed analysis, please subscribe to the Centre for Governance and Political Studies. [www.centgps.com.my](http://www.centgps.com.my)



**Cent GPS Research**

002868327-U

B-12-03A Menara Bata  
PJ Trade Centre  
Bandar Damansara Perdana  
47820 Petaling Jaya Malaysia

P : +603 7726 6700

F : +603 7726 6076

[www.centgps.com.my](http://www.centgps.com.my)