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# Pakatan Rakyat turns defensive over its blunders

**BELEAGUERED:** Backlash in trying to politicise every issue

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**T**HE opposition pact has found itself seething in criticism of late, from brickbats hurled against their populist manifesto to accusations that alluded them to be involved in the Lahad Datu stand-off.

For the past two weeks, Pakatan Rakyat's head honcho and supposedly its prime minister candidate Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had been on the defensive in his nationwide ceramah rounds, as noted by political observers.

The Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) de facto leader's speech in Malacca recently was seen as an exasperated attempt to defuse tension pertaining to party vice-president Tian Chua's blunder, in relation to his comments that allegedly ridiculed the death of two police commandos at the hands of the Sulu terrorists.

Ironically PKR strategic director Rafizi Ramli, when asked on Pakatan's approach in deflecting the issues, turned defensive himself, albeit denying that the opposition coalition had yet to suffer a twitch against putative accusations.

"I have no comment on that. There is no point in answering that. The NST (*New Straits Times*) has also been very nasty to us. Why do we have to reply to accusations made by these nincompoops (pro-government media)," said Rafizi when contacted yesterday.

Nevertheless several political analysts begged to differ, saying that the opposition parties had already shifted their campaigning gear to a defensive mode while trying to rubbish accusations against them.

PKR, in particular, is now suffering the consequences of trying to politicise just about everything, said Professor Datuk Dr Mustafa Ishak of Universiti Utara Malaysia.

He cited as an example the insurmountable criticism against Tian Chua and that the opposition led by Anwar was having a difficult time convincing voters that their agenda was never against the people's spirit of patriotism.

"But obviously, they are accusing the government for trying to stall the elections by the possibility of calling for a *darurat* (emergency) to be announced in light of what is

happening in Lahad Datu.

"I don't think that an emergency period would be called since the government is handling the matter there well. The people of this nation have resoundingly supported the ruling party's approach against the terrorists," said Mustafa.

The political scientist also described Tian Chua as "stupid" for not being able to differentiate issues to be politicised, which showed the overall mentality of those in the opposition pact.

"At the same time, if the accusations that they are involved in instigating the militants in Lahad Datu are untrue, why should they become agitated by it?"

But the opposition parties' predicament had originally snowballed from the controversial use of the word "Allah" issue, which until today has yet to reach a conclusion with even Pas leaders refusing to comment on the matter further, as explained by Professor Datuk Dr Zainal Kling.

The National Professors' Council socio-culture cluster head said since then, the government had the political upper-hand following its handling of the Lahad Datu incident, which had pooled better endorsement from the people.

"Pakatan has been on the defensive mode since the 'Allah' issue. The controversy had led to prolonged infighting, with DAP and PKR leaders then claiming that (Pas President Datuk Seri Abdul) Hadi (Awang) had agreed that the word could be used among non-Muslims.

"And now, you have Tian Chua spewing something that should not have been said. Of course, this has made them all the more defensive in responding to public reprobation," said Zainal.

The situation had cornered the opposition coalition, which he said had yet to even resolve issues stemming from its manifesto since its launch last month.

"The proposed budget, to realise its ambitious pledges listed in the manifesto, have also received general rebuke from experts. It is something difficult to fulfil and Pakatan is

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still trying to convince the people otherwise," said Zainal

With many questions as yet unanswered and controversies unresolved, Mustafa said the opposition pact did not have the makings of a good government.

"Their priorities are not well-placed. I believe now many have lost their confidence in Pakatan, compounded by its wavering credibility judging from the management of issues that have kept beleaguering the alliance."

