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Mahathir-Kelantan

A news analysis by A. Halim Taih  
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KOTA BAHARU, May 25 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister's date in Kelantan on Thursday to open the \$19-million Pasir Mas-Salor Bridge is symbolic, according to observers' interpretations of the event.

Most significantly, they said, is that the PAS-led state government would make the most of the event to improve ties with the federal government to go beyond mere working relations.

Menteri Besar Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat has welcomed the news of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit saying it proved the futility of efforts to strain Kuala Lumpur-Kota Baharu relations.

Observers speculate that, if at all there is attempt to disrupt federal-state relations as referred to by Haji Nik Aziz, it is most likely to be linked to Parti Semangat 46.

Why Semangat 46?

The observers argued that warm relations between the state government or PAS and the Federal Government or Barisan Nasional (BN) would only leave Semangat 46 out in the cold.-- more.

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Mahathir-Kelantan 2 Kota Baharu (news analysis)

Kelantan is the only state where Semangat 46 -- a component in the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah coalition which ousted the Barisan Nasional state government in the general election last October -- has a hold.

An observer said losing its grip in Kelantan because of good state-federal relations would cost Semangat 46's future in the state and elsewhere.

Sports and Youth Minister Senator Haji Annuar Musa, who is the federal government's representative for Kelantan, had said that Nik Aziz would be invited to the bridge opening ceremony during Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's visit.

Although he has visited Kelantan before on party matters, it would be Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's first official visit as Prime Minister since Kelantan fell to the Angkatan coalition in the general election.

Of the visit, Nik Aziz had said that it proved that democracy prevails and is practised.-- more.

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Mahathir-Kelantan 3 Kota Bharu (news analysis)

Nik Aziz had said he was willing to meet the Prime Minister either here or in Kuala Lumpur and indicated that he would attend the bridge opening ceremony.

Rachok Umno division head Haji Ahmad Shahabuddin Mohamed Noor described the visit as testimony of the Prime Minister's integrity as a leader and that he was not being vindictive over the BN's defeat in Kelantan.

The local business community too is also looking forward to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's visit.

Secretary of the Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kelantan branch, Zain Sulong said the visit would help restore good relations between the Federal and state government.

Rencik Zain felt that positive bilateral ties between the Federal and state government would herald more development programmes in Kelantan. -- more.

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Mahathir-Kelantan 4 Kota Bharu (news analysis)

During the visit, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is Umno President, is also expected to receive application forms from a large group of Semangat 46 members to join Umno.

Haji Wan Mohamad Bakar, who heads the coordination committee to accept Semangat 46 members into Umno, estimated that some 30,000 application forms would be handed over to the party President.

Haji Ahmad Shahabuddin, a veteran Kelantan Umno leader, said the exercise would not be a political gimmick as the forms were to be submitted outside the general election season.

+Normally, such handing-over of application forms is done during the run-up to an election. In this case, it will done after over eight months since the general election, he said. -- Bernama.

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