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Teluk Intan loss a hot topic among delegates

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The defeat of the Gerakan candidate in the recent Teluk Intan parliamentary by-election topped the list on the agenda at the party's national delegates assembly today.

Opening the floodgates was Negri Sembilan delegate Dr Kuan You Chai, who said the defeat of what was considered a safe seat for the Barisan Nasional was a blow.

"Where did we go wrong?" he asked about 1,000 delegates and observers attending the 26th annual assembly at the Gerakan headquarters in Taman Shamelin, Cheras.

The assembly was earlier opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and for the first time, the Press was allowed to sit in during the address.

Calling for a political rejuvenation, Dr Kuan told delegates to close ranks and play a proactive role in assisting BN representatives serve in their constituencies.

Relating an incident, Dr Kuan said a Member of Parliament (not from Gerakan) could not attend an opening ceremony in his own constituency as he did not know how to get to the venue.

"Party members must play their role in ensuring the elected BN candidate serve their constituency well.

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step... We must strive for the future generation," he said.

Penang delegate Tony Khaw Chong Boon, a businessman, urged members to remain united.

"Such a conducive environment augurs well for the business community," he said.

On the party's defeat in Teluk Intan, Khaw reminded the delegates that it was a lesson for all.

The sole woman to address the morning session, Azmar Mohd Illias, received a thunderous applause when she questioned the viability of the Government's privatisation concept.

"Tenaga Nasional, Projek Lebuhraya Utara Selatan, Indah Water (to name a few) ... The rakyat seem to be burdened with their rates, and in certain cases, annual increases."

The delegate, who hails from Taman Gembira, Klang, said what was initially supposed to have been a better move (the privatisation) for the rakyat, has now turned out otherwise.

"They (the conglomerates) only seem to be concerned about profits, what about the burden on the rakyat."

Kelantan delegate Lau Chin Chua said following the Teluk Intan defeat, the party had ensured members played their role effectively to help the Barisan Nasional in the recent Semerak by-election.

"The loss of Teluk Intan is a bitter pill to swallow," he said.

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