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Umno-Kelantan (A news analysis)

DELIVERING A BETTER LIFE TO KELANTANESE

By: Mohamad Bakri Darus

KOTA BAHARU, July 28 (Bernama) -- A prince and a doctor, both influential, see that the people of the prince's home state do not get the better things they deserved than currently provided for.

The duo tell the people there that they can bring about the desired change.

How do the duo first impress upon the people to take them seriously?

By the prince and the doctor courageously and publicly apologising to each other and burying the hatchet to end their decade-long political feud.

This the prince, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and the doctor, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad did when Dr Mahathir visited Kelantan last week.

Both men are bent on improving the lot of Kelantanese, who for the past decade have been under a PAS-led state government which still left much to be desired, development-wise.

During his latest 'house call' to Kelantan, Dr Mahathir prescribed to the people that desiring change is an inner-feeling.

And there is no better time for them to institute change and let out the inner desire than the coming general election.

"The Kelantanese should help themselves change," he said. And this is by way of giving the Barisan Nasional a fresh mandate and letting it regain power in Kelantan.

The Barisan Nasional (BN) lost Kelantan to PAS in 1990 and failed to regain it five years later from a then opposition alliance in which Tengku Razaleigh formed part of the picture.

Now it is totally a different scenario although Tengku Razaleigh is still very much in the picture.

By simple deduction, political observers said, if it was Tengku Razaleigh who was then instrumental in denying a BN comeback to Kelantan in the last two general elections, he also holds the key to a real BN comeback in the next.

Political observers said Dr Mahathir's handing over of the Kelantan Umno liaison chairmanship to Tengku Razaleigh last month is a recognition of the catalytic touch that the prince has to hasten a winning chemistry for the BN.

Part of the equation for such a chemistry has already come from the Kelantan Royal Household itself, if Dr Mahathir's audience with the Sultan of Kelantan during his recent visit, is anything to go by, said the observers.

Dr Mahathir left the Kelantanese with a choice between sustained backwardness and dynamic progressions to start their new millennium with.

In plain-talk the prime minister pointed out that the BN needs nothing less than a fresh mandate for it to bring the attendant and obligatory benefits to the people.

This was because from experience, the federal government had difficulty in securing commitment from an opposition-run state over release of land, for example, when it comes to putting up federal-funded infrastructural projects.

It was these uncertainties that partly prevented the federal government from undertaking key economic projects such as developing Kelantan's offshore oil and gas deposits and extending the proposed RM4-billion east coast expressway to cover the state as well.

This resulted in a dearth of development in Kelantan in the last decade.

Kelantanese by and large recognise that going by the long list of development projects that the federal government had already accomplished elsewhere nation-wide, Dr Mahathir could deliver the goods as promised, alongside Tengku Razaleigh, himself a former finance minister.

There is ample time between now and polling day for deciding to let or not to let the doctor and the prince take them and the next generation out of the rut of living in one Malaysia's poorest states.

When Dr Mahathir's motorcade was passing through part of the capital to take the flight home last week, onlookers readily waved at him.

One interpretation of that scene is that Kelantanese want the BN to come back.

-- BERNAMA

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