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Sabah-Khalil

FEDERAL LEADERS GET WARM RECEPTION IN SABAH

By: Roslan Ariffin

KOTA KINABALU, March 9 (Bernama) -- Sabahans have accepted the fact that the presence of federal leaders in the state is to help them and this has a positive effect on Barisan Nasional's (BN) chances in this weekend's state election, said Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob.

Speaking as the Sabah BN election machinery coordinator, he said the warm reception the leaders got from the local people should put to rest opposition claims that such visits were aimed at "colonising the state".

"The presence of federal leaders this time is fruitful as it has eased long existing barriers between Sabahans and peninsular Malaysians," he told Bernama.

Khalil, who has been here for more than a month to oversee BN preparations for the polls, said this development was a boost for the BN election workers, especially those from the peninsula, as it had a positive effect in the context of national integration.

He said Sabahans now recognised that the leaders from Kuala Lumpur were "not out to cause them trouble but to help them".

"During our election campaigns, we are not at the forefront and it is the Sabah leaders themselves who assume the leading role. We merely help out in situations where we are needed," he said.

This is because the federal leaders understood the local feelings and culture, enabling them to get along with the locals, said Khalid.

Such was not the case in previous elections because then the leaders' programmes were not properly organised and, more importantly, those from the peninsula had not fully understood the needs of the locals, he said.

Khalil said federal leaders were sincere in wanting to help Sabah as proven by the personal attention given to the state by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Describing the reception given to federal leaders by Sabahans as beyond expectation, Khalil said the BN was confident that the locals had accepted policies brought on by the coalition.

They now realise that these policies were the best and the most effective formula for the country in the long term, he said.

Khalil's views were fully agreed to by Selangor Umno's chief coordinator for this election, Datuk Zakaria Md Deros, who made his own observations while campaigning in Tuaran and Kota Belud.

"Together with the local leaders, we go from one kampung to another to resolve the people's problems, and provide assistance wherever possible," he said.

Zakaria said Sabahans, especially in interior areas, were in need of amenities such as roads, jetties, agricultural tools, besides household needs.

-- BERNAMA

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