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Ghani: Barisan win to spur more growth

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JOHOR BARU, Thurs. - The Barisan Nasional will focus on accelerating economic growth in Johor if it is returned to power in the general election.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said should the BN be returned to form the next State Government, he would cash in on the current wave of economic recovery to spur all-round growth

"We want to perpetuate growth and at the same time strengthen the fundamentals of the Johor economy," he told the New Straits Times in an interview.

Ghani, who is defending his Seremban State seat in the election, is leading the BN's bid to retain its clean slate of all 40 State and 20 parliamentary seats in Johor.

Should that happen, he is tipped to be reappointed Menteri Besar by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

His 'back-to-basics' development approach during his first term as Menteri Besar had won him many admirers in Johor, with his rallying call for 'holistic redevelopment' resonating all over the State.

Among the initiatives pioneered by Ghani are the massive 'Rumah Rakyat' programme for the low-income group, the 'Projek Jalan Kampung' in the rural areas, and Community Colleges to give school-leavers a 'second chance' to study and acquire skills.

His programmes to boost the quality of life of the people through making available more open spaces to serve as 'green lungs', public parks and recreation centres have also won him praise.

On development goals should the BN be returned to form the next State Government, Ghani said:

"For the time being, we will continue with the present development agenda, with full implementation at all levels.

"But there will be special focus on the economy.

"I want to concentrate on the manufacturing, services and food production sectors and perpetuate growth in these areas.

"I would also like to develop the human resources sector with stress on manpower training and skills development to prepare for the future," he said.

Ghani said should the people again put their trust in the BN government, he would continue to build consensus through open discussions with target groups to help formulate a new development action plan.

"These are exciting times for Johor. I want to listen to the people, forge closer links and understand their hopes and aspirations," he said, adding that it would take him about six months to come up with a new development agenda for Johor.

In Kuala Lumpur, Bernama quotes Umno supreme council member Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as saying the BN would maintain its stranglehold on Johor despite the presence of Keadilan in the election.

Voters in Johor would not be influenced by the "political games" of the opposition, said Muhyiddin, who is Youth and Sports Minister.

Keadilan was not showing cohesion in Johor and its internal problems would put voters off, he told reporters after launching the book 'Crossing The Finishing Line', an official write-up on last year's 16th Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

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