

25/07/2002

Working to win next election

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JOHOR BARU, Wed. - The State Barisan Nasional has drafted an agenda which is jointly being implemented by its component parties at divisional level to claim a new mandate from the people in the next general election.

Johor BN chairman Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the agenda, which was put into practice a month ago, involved all BN component parties to ensure keen participation at the grassroots level.

The agenda focuses on grassroots activities which are continuously carried out by party leaders and involved mass public participation such as gotong-royong, sporting activities, dialogues and talks.

The State Constituency Mukim Co-ordination Committees which are chaired by State Assemblymen have also been roped in to make the agenda a success, said Ghani who is Johor Menteri Besar.

"I believe the activities will be able to foster closer co-operation among BN component parties at the grassroots level and subsequently bridge the gap between the party and the people."

He said the agenda was not only important to the coalition's activities in the run-up to the general election, but also functioned as a benchmark in evaluating the State Government's public service track record.

"Many are predicting an early general election next year. Whether it happens then or at any given time, we must always be ready."

Ghani said this during the opening of the State BN Convention at the Eden Gardel Hotel, here, today.

Also present were State BN leaders and about 400 delegates from the various BN component parties. Umno will be represented by 130 delegates, MCA (90), MIC (70), Gerakan (60) and PPP (50).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to close the convention, themed Barisan Nasional for the Excellence of the Malaysian Nation tomorrow at the Johor Baru City Council Indoor Stadium.

Ghani said although Johor was a traditional BN stronghold, sweeping all parliamentary and State seats contested in the 1995 and 1999 general elections, the coalition could not afford to sit back and relax.

He said one way of consolidating the coalition's position in Johor was to ensure that all the people in the State become BN members.

"Umno members account for 43 per cent of Malays, aged above 15, with MCA and Gerakan respectively representing some 30 per cent and six per cent of the Chinese population. MIC members make up about 61 per cent of all Indians in Johor.

"Therefore, there is still room for us to expand our combined membership at the grassroots, and this should be one of our resolutions for this year."

The State BN, he said, had to work hard to thwart the Opposition's election scare tactics to create confusion in its bid to sway voters to support its shaky ideologies.

"Umno and all BN parties must continue to expose the weaknesses of the Opposition, just as we succeeded in doing during the recent by-elections. If we sit quietly, the dishonesty of the Opposition will chip away our dignity, morality and the good political values."

Ghani also said that all races in Malaysia have been destined to share their future and work together in finding a common identity and nationality.