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BN-Election
KEDAH UMNO HAS RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

By: Zulkefli Salleh

ALOR STAR, Feb 5 (Bernama) -- The Kedah Umno believes it has all the ingredients for a successful campaign, in the upcoming general election, to sweep the state from under the feet of the opposition.

Even from the aspect of sheer numbers, the Kedah Umno, with 1,900 branches and 280,000 members, not to mention members of Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties MIC, MCA and Gerakan, already has a substantial edge over the opposition.

With the dedication of its members, there is no reason for the BN not to wrest a two-third majority or even a clean sweep of the 36 State and 15 Parliamentary seats on offer.

This was the gist of the speech by Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain at the launch of the State BN election machinery by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad here last Saturday.

Syed Razak, who is also the State Umno Liaison Committee Chairman, unveiled the nine master ingredients which, if whipped up, could bind the hearts of the 800,000 registered voters to the BN.

Among these, he said, were efforts without expecting rewards in terms of projects, supporting whichever candidate was fielded, utilising election machinery for the good of the party and not the individual and upgrading logistics like ballot boxes, voter profiles and information and communication technology.

Giving an example of how teamwork could benefit the party, Syed Razak said if Umno's 280,000 members pasted a poster each, one aspect of the election, namely the poster war, would easily be won as the "Rice Bowl" of Malaysia would turn dark blue with BN's colours.

Political analysts had also time and again said that the BN's loss of 12 State and eight Parliamentary seats in the 1999 general election was not

due to the strength of the opposition but by weaknesses in Umno.

Among these weaknesses is the refusal of some in the party to support the candidates, and the antidote, some believe, is the appointment of Dr Mahathir as the state's BN advisor.

His message during the launch was simple and clear -- if BN is to win two-thirds majority, all BN members have to support whomever is chosen as candidate, whether from their own party or otherwise.

The presence of Dr Mahathir has clearly lifted the spirits of the members, so much so, that when asked to raise their hands if they were willing to support any candidate put forward, the 3,000-strong crowd got to their feet, raised their hands and yelled "kami sanggup" (we are willing).

If this spirit continues and spreads among all Umno and members of BN component parties, the opposition is expected to be in for a rough ride come the 11th general election.

Recent profiles of by-elections show that the BN faced some tough times in Kedah, especially when they lost the two-third majority in the State Legislative Assembly following the Lunas by-election.

The State seat, which came up for grabs after the murder of incumbent Dr Joe Fernandez in 2000, fell to Keadilan.

In 2002, however, following the death of PAS president Datuk Fadhil Noor, Umno regained the Parliamentary seat of Pendang while PAS retained the Anak Bukit State seat.

Dr Mahathir's advice for successfully facing PAS is also simple but effective: "Have faith that Umno is the party which truly upholds Islam and raises the dignity of the Ummah and do not be shy to expose the lies of the opposition".

As for the non-Muslims, Dr Mahathir said they should not bite PAS' bait to foster greater ties as this was only a ploy to win votes.

The existing racial cooperation and power-sharing in the BN has indeed been proven to be the successful formula, he had said.

With the words of the two leaders still ringing in their ears, the

Kedah BN election machinery should indeed be ready to defeat the
opposition
where it would hurt the most.

-- BERNAMA

ZS EMK ZUL