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Election-Transition
NEW LEADERSHIP SET TO GET VOTE OF CONFIDENCE - ANALYST

By: Muna Khalid

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysians are set to give the country's new leadership a resounding vote of confidence in the upcoming general election, said a political analyst.

Prof Datuk Dr Syed Arabi Idid said as the opposition had no issues to capitalise on, the position of Barisan Nasional (BN) as the ruling party would be further entrenched.

He said the nation's history had shown that in previous power transitions, the people would usually give their vote to the succeeding leaders.

"We have seen when there is transition of the Prime Minister ... (from) Tun Abdul Razak (to) Tun Hussein Onn and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, people gave their votes to the new leader. It has become a trend.

"During the administration of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (now), we feel voters have a similar mood as the ideology is the same (with previous leaders)," he told Bernama in an interview.

Abdullah took over as the country's fifth Prime Minister from Dr Mahathir Oct 31 last year. Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak succeeded Abdullah as the Deputy Prime Minister.

Dr Syed Arabi, who is the International Islamic University's Dean of Research said BN remained a dominant political entity capable of winning more seats in the 11th general election.

"BN has become more united. We do not see its component parties making demands," he said when commenting on the country's current political scenario.

Dr Syed Arabi said the opposition parties had no issues to harp on, unlike in 1999 where corruption and cronyism were their main agenda.

"Issues raised in 1999 are no longer relevant now. For example, the new Prime Minister has taken action against corruption," he said.

He said Abdullah's approach to fight graft, regardless the status of those involved, was among the factors which enhanced the people's trust and confidence in the current government.

"The opposition parties are now in a tight spot as they thrive on issues. If there are no issues, then it will be difficult for them," said Dr Syed Arabi.

He said Abdullah's willingness to share ideas by inviting the people "to work with him and not to work for him" was a huge obstacle to the opposition.

"I think this phrase has captured the people's hearts," he said.

Dr Syed Arabi said BN had faced a thorny parth in the last general election with the threat posed by Parti Keadilan Nasional which formed an alliance with other opposition parties.

However this loose opposition alliance had now fragmented, he said.

"PAS and DAP have gone their separate ways and opposition parties no longer have uniform strategies," he said.

Dr Syed Arabi said BN was capable of regaining Terengganu in the next general election as the state Umno now had a new set of leaders.

He said BN lost in Terengganu in 1999 as voters in the state were unhappy with its leaders at that time.

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