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BN has its work cut out in Kedah

Zubaidah Abu Bakar

KEDAH politics has always been in the limelight because it is the home State of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

What goes on in the State undoubtedly attracts much attention, especially from the time after Barisan Nasional's poor showing in the 1999 general election.

Kedah is the only State where BN does not have a two-thirds majority.

Pas secured 12 of the 36 State seats and eight of 15 parliamentary seats in the last general election.

After three by-elections at Lunas, Pendang and Anak Bukit, Pas now has 11 State seats and seven parliamentary seats, and Parti Keadilan Nasional one State seat.

BN lost in the Lunas and Anak Bukit State by-elections but regained the Pendang parliamentary seat from Pas in a tensely-fought contest.

The Opposition, as everyone in Kedah is aware, is saying it has enough ammunition to attack and destroy the administration of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain.

Anak Bukit assemblyman Amiruddin Hamzah said the heli-logging issue in the Ulu Muda forest reserve project will dominate the Opposition campaign although it has been stopped.

"The RM5 million project to build chalets on Pulau Payar marine park without an Environmental Impact Assessment report has been added to the list," he said.

The Menteri Besar may have expressed his confidence in the BN and Umno election machinery to halt the Opposition campaign but his views are not shared by others, including some assemblymen.

But he says unity has been restored in Umno divisions and infighting, said to be the cause of BN losing some of its seat to Pas in the last general election, has stopped.

"We are always taking measures to strengthen ourselves. Our study has shown that there is no more infighting," said Syed Razak.

This may be true but other issues need to be addressed quickly.

A group of concerned Kedah citizens did their homework and they said the findings of a survey on people's acceptance of the State Government are far from good.

One of the findings which observers believed can be destructive to BN's aspiration of defeating the Opposition, is that not enough is being done for the three main groups of Kedah voters, the padi farmers, fishermen and the Chinese voters.

Informal studies by other interest groups, whose members comprise professionals and those who are no longer active in politics, conclude that Kedah BN and the State Government must buck up.

"I will be lucky if I manage to win by a majority of a few hundred," a BN assemblyman said of BN's chances of regaining the lost seats.

Another assemblyman claimed that many assemblymen are feeling the pressure mounting as the general election gets closer.

"Pas and Keadilan did their groundwork a long time ago and we are still wondering to whom we should report our activities," said the assemblyman from another BN component party.

An Umno representative from a constituency in southern Kedah said it would be an uphill task to convince voters unhappy that the State Government is concentrating on projects in Kubang Rotan, Syed Razak's

constituency.

Getting back the two-thirds majority will be the best present Kedah can give to Dr Mahathir before his retirement in October.

This is not something impossible to do.