

Kit Siang: Will PM forsake integrity for 'winnability'?
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's vow to veto BN component parties' choice of candidates if they were not "winnable" will likely overlook the candidate's integrity, said DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang.

In a statement today, Lim (right) asked if Najib had used the same criterion in the selection of Mohd Isa Samad as the candidate for the Bagan Pinang by-election.

Lim points out that although Mohd Isa won handsomely despite his tainted history, which saw him vacating his ministerial position after being suspended from Umno for three years on a vote buying charge, this had an impact on the Najib administration's commitment to stamp out graft.

"His candidacy exposed the hollowness and hypocrisy of Najib's Government Transformation Programme (GTP) which declared 'fighting corruption' as one of the six NKRA (National Key Result Areas)," said Lim.

Pointing out that veteran Umno leaders such as Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah had also cautioned Najib on fielding Mohd Isa, Lim said that Najib's move had essentially stymied his reform pledges.

"Mohd Isa's recent appointment as Federal Land Authority (Felda) chairperson had only driven home this message - that winning in the next general election will be Najib's top priority even if his alphabet soup of slogans, 1Malaysia, GTP, ETP etc. are to take a back seat," said Lim.

Can component parties veto Umno's choice?

Lim was commenting on Najib's speech at the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) convention yesterday, where he told party workers he wants "winnable" candidates and would exercise his veto powers to strike out names "not accepted by the people".

SUPP suffered heavy losses to DAP during the 2007 state elections and is under pressure to perform during the state elections that must be held by September this year.

Lim also questioned how Najib (left) derived his veto powers as the BN constitution does not state this.

"If Najib can veto potential candidates proposed by BN component parties... can leaders of the other BN component parties veto proposed Umno candidates on similar grounds of winnability in the next general election.

"Or is this a solely one-way traffic, highlighting the further concentration of power and greater political hegemony of Umno in BN in the past three years?" he asked.

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