

Saifuddin: Use AGM to transform Umno
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Umno supreme council member Saifuddin Abdullah expressed hope that the party president Najib Abdul Razak will make the coming Umno annual general assembly (AGM) a “political transformation assembly” that will continue the government’s reform initiatives introduced on the eve of Malaysia Day.

In his column in Malay daily Sinar Harian today, the higher education deputy minister said that the 61st AGM, which will be held from Nov 29 to Dec 3 at the Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur, is very important as it is seemed to be the last Umno assembly before the next general election.

Extraordinary attention, Saifuddin (right) pointed out, will be given to Najib’s policy speech which will be delivered on Dec 1.

“Many hope that he will explain and give details on the political transformation that will be implemented.

“So far Najib’s most important speech on political transformation was the recent eve of Malaysia Day speech, in which he announced the abolition of the Internal Security Act (ISA) and Emergency Ordinance as well as the expansion of media freedom....

“Therefore many have pinned high hopes that his policy speech this time will symbolise the peak of national political transformation,” said the Temerloh MP.

According to him, such expectations are rational in view of the many political decisions faced by the government such as electoral reform and whether the government will appeal against the Court of Appeal’s decision that declared a section of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) barring students from political activities as unconstitutional.

Other issues that Najib should take into consideration, he said, are the automatic voter registration proposal, lowering the voting age to 18, calling for a referendum, local government elections, political integrity, new government framework, democratic innovations and progressive political thought.

Saifuddin also hoped that Najib’s speech will affect the speeches of the other party leaders and delegates.

Utusan pushes a completely different agenda

On the other hand, Umno-owned Malay daily Utusan Malaysia pushed a completely different agenda, portraying the AGM as the preparation for a battle that will decide the fate of Malay political dominance in the nation.

According to an article by Utusan Malaysia news editor Zulkiflee Bakar published today, the next general election is not only the do-or-die battle for BN political power, but more importantly it is the battle of political survival for the Malays.

Unfortunately, Zulkiflee claimed that the culture of infighting over candidacy is still dogging the largest ruling party.

“So far it is still difficult to say (whether the party members are prepared to sacrifice personal struggle for the party interest), but what is clear after the last Umno AGM is that the phenomena of infighting, sabotage politics and fighting over candidacy are still strong among the leaders and members, especially at divisional and state levels.”

Zulkiflee cited as an example that a group of Umno leaders of a state constituency in northern Malaysia sent a memorandum to the prime minister, bad-mouthing the current Umno representatives.

In another division in the east coast, he claimed, the division head did not distribute the allocation from party headquarters to the grassroots leaders to organise programmes for the people.

“In fact many Umno divisions are not serious in running programmes to garner the people’s support on the grounds that the general election is still far, and some (members) think that why should they bother if the candidates are the not themselves or the individuals they support.”

He cautioned that if the members refuse to change such an attitude, they would be cursed by their grandchildren when the Malays lose power in the next general election.

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