

## **Najib urges Umno to overcome 'game changers'**

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**by Kuek Ser Kuang Keng**

Facing probably the toughest general election in the history of Umno, its president and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak urged party members today to overcome the new "game changers" in the political landscape, including the new media - or else tragedy awaits the party.

"We must realise, if Umno still fails to understand and appreciate the factors that become the 'game changers'... and not take steps to re-frame the 'game plan', which is our planned movement, then we will become tragedy," Najib told more than 5,000 participants of the Umno annual general assembly (AGM) this morning.

The 'game changers', he elaborated, consist of three elements - the new media, new political reality and new thinking among the voters.

"If Umno does not understand the new realities of the national political landscape, how are Umno and BN going to succeed?"

New media can determine victory or defeat

"Secondly, the new media. Like it or not, Umno should take control of the new media because today, at this moment, it can determine victory or defeat. It can level out the playing field as well as make a battle unequal.

"Hence Umno people must know the ways to take advantage of the new media for the survival of the party," Najib stressed, adding that the war is no longer being fought in the conventional battlefield.

"Thirdly, Umno should also appreciate that there is new thought among all segments of the electorate, so we must attract their support. Umno cannot have the attitude or be seen as insolent and arrogant, or else the voters and the people will shun us," he added.

Earlier in his speech, Najib cited the Arab Springs to drive his point that manipulating news and the truth are no longer the way to ensure political power in this era.

"With such sophistication (in terms of information technology), we witnessed the final moments of Saddam Hussein on the gallows, as well as the fate of Muammar Gaddafi. Changes that occurred in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, as well as protests in Syria, are also the genesis of the social media.

"We found that even though the leaders of these nations tried to spin the news, the use of mobile phones, broadband and YouTube were able to tell what had actually happened in those countries."

'Communicate with youths in their language'

In his hour-long speech, Najib, clad in an ocean blue traditional Malay costume and a black songkok, recounted 10 incidents that happened to Umno since it was established in 1946, calling them the 10 'game changers' that the party had overcome.

They include the departure of party founder Onn Jaafar, the forming of Alliance with MCA and MIC, the struggle to obtain independence, the racial riots of 1969, the split of Umno in 1988 and the emergence of information technology since the 1990s.

The current political reality and new media are the eleventh 'game changers', he said.

On young voters, the crucial group that gave the unprecedented electoral success to the opposition in the

2008 general election, Najib stressed that they were different from the previous generations.

"This generation, they don't like to be scolded, don't like to be told what should be done, don't like to be told what is right and wrong, and most uncomfortable for them is when we raise our contributions of the past."

On the contrary, they want to be consulted and given the freedom to judge, speak and make decisions based on the ideas gathered from the information market, Najib said. Hence, Umno had to communicate with them in their own language.

It was under this context that the government announced its move to amend Section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) to allow students above the majority age of 18 years old to become members of political parties, he said.

"Umno always listens to the voice of the youth and appreciates their role and contributions. We recognise them, not only during elections but at every moment," Najib added.

The official opening of the Umno AGM by Najib at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur this morning was attended by 5,447 delegates, comprising 2,627 delegates from the 191 divisions nationwide, 944 Wanita delegates, 942 Youth delegates and 934 Puteri delegates.

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