

BN targets the youth before Pakatan gets them
MalaysiaKini.com
July 14, 2012
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The BN has launched a youth volunteer group (BNYB) to help the ruling coalition reach out to the younger generation, generally seen as anti-establishment and pro-opposition.

Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin, who was in Penang to kick off the event yesterday, said young Malaysians could contribute to BN in various ways for greater acceptance of the coalition among the people.

Khairy said he formed the group because while many young people support the BN, they have no avenue to hone their leadership skills.

"They feel it is difficult for them to become leaders or to hold posts, or even become party officials at divisional level," he said during his speech at the launch.

BNYV was first launched in Kuala Lumpur with Penang being the first state to set up the group.

To date, about 500 volunteers have registered with the organisation, currently based in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur.

Penang has registered about 230 members. The participants, Khairy stressed, did not have their sights set on becoming candidates in the coming election.

They do not receive any allowance but will be taking part in activities together with BN parties.

Wooing the students

Khairy, who is the MP for Rembau, said BNYV aims to achieve two objectives - to show that the youth continue to support the BN and secondly, to challenge the perception that people would only support the coalition for rewards.

He said the group would target young professionals and university students, since the Universities and University Colleges Act of 1971 has been amended to allow them to participate in politics.

"We must respond quickly to the amendment by approaching the students, or else they would be won over by the opposition," he said.

Khairy also said that as the opposition in Penang, the BN needed to ensure that the present government led by Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng was made accountable.

He said the Pakatan Rakyat government might have enjoyed a honeymoon period of two or three years but several "scandals" were beginning to be exposed.

The Penang government was not perfect, he argued, and should instead be replaced by the BN.

"We hope the youth can explain all these to the people, even though we may be outnumbered by them (Pakatan)," Khairy said.

"Just as they do at the federal level, they continue to attack us so that people will remember (the issues)," he added.

"Since people tend to forget, we should also keep reminding them," he said.

Why hillslope projects not cancelled?

Khairy said Pakatan has pledged to reduce the price of petrol, to cancel student loans, highway tolls and contracts with independent power producers.

He asked why the Penang government could not cancel the hillslope projects. While Lim has blamed the previous BN government for the projects, he has yet to cancel them, said Khairy.

"Don't lay all the blame on the previous government. What about foreign direct investment? Who built the Penang bridge?"

"Don't you think that the federal government and the previous state administration have contributed to all that?" Khairy asked.

Meanwhile, state BN Youth chief Oh Tong Keong cited Election Commission statistics that two million new voters have been registered and they will have an impact on the coming general election.

Among the current voters, 40 percent are youths, of whom 62 percent have yet to make up their mind on which party to vote for, claimed Oh.

"The youths may look at the quality of the candidates, whether they are approachable, their party performance and manifesto," he said in his speech at the launch.

"BNYV will focus on these young voters to get as much support from them as we can," Oh added.