Umno less arrogant under Najib, says party veteran
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By Kuek Ser Kuang Keng

Veteran Umno leader Abdullah Ahmad said that Umno, under Najib Abdul Razak's stewardship, is now less arrogant, making the ruling party more electable to the Malay electorate, which he described as the main battleground for the upcoming general election.

Abdullah (extreme left in photo), a former MP for Kok Lanas and former editor-in-chief of New Straits Times, told a forum in Kuala Lumpur this morning that Malay voters, who generally prefer stability and continuity, revolted against Umno in the 2008 general election because they were deeply disappointed with Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's inept leadership.

However, Najib has been doing a decent job since he took over from Abdullah in 2009, he said, and Umno is likely to reclaim the Malay heartland in the next general polls.

"Najib's leadership shows no sign of coming to an end, and Umno shows no sign of diminishing.

"Najib is not going to be the last Umno prime minister," he stressed.

In contrast, Abdullah pointed out that the political prospect of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim would be dim, if Pakatan Rakyat fails to capture Putrajaya in the coming polls.

"If Anwar loses, he would be 70 in the 14th general election. I don't think he would live his political career beyond that."

Abdullah was a close associate of former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and is currently leading a think tank called the Institute of Political and Economic Analysis (IKAPE).

'More credible politicians in Pakatan'

He was one of the many speakers invited to speak at the 15th Malaysia Strategic Outlook Conference today, organised by think tank Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli).

Another speaker Denison Jayasooria, who is the principal research fellow at the Institute of Ethnic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), however, commented that there are more credible and conviction-driven politicians in the opposition coalition who are qualified to lead the country.

"People like (Bukit Gelugor MP) Karpal Singh (left), (Petaling Jaya Utara MP) Tony Pua, (Klang MP) Charles Santiago and (Kuala Selangor MP) Dzulkefly Ahmad.

In Sabah and Sarawak they also have (Ba'kelalan assemblyperson) Baru Bian.

"The voters should not lose sight of it and focus too much on the candidate of prime minister," he said.

On the other hand, he observed that BN has not come out with new faces, particularly MIC.

Should Pakatan Rakyat rule Putrajaya in the next general election, Denison said he expects Malaysia would not be worse off as Pakatan would still maintain the balance of race and religion, as well as a Malay-dominated cabinet.

"There would be power sharing among the three parties, instead of the current coalition structure which is dominated by a single party. The power sharing of BN in 1957 and 1969 was very different from now," he elaborated to Malaysiakini when met after the forum.

Nevertheless, Denison believed that BN will still be able to defend Putrajaya in the 13th general election, but with a reduced majority.

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