

## **Muhyiddin: All BN parties to blame for 2008 downfall**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**March 18, 2013**

**By Hazlan Zakaria**

Umno deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin has said that, while the party is often accused of causing the BN's 2008 electoral debacle, other component parties must share the blame.

"BN's image was dented not only because of Umno,.. (but also other components), we ask our component parties, some with far bigger problems, to also strengthen their parties" Muhyiddin said.

He was addressing a gathering of former Umno elected representatives, party veterans and former government officials in Putrajaya today, prior to a holding a closed-door dialogue session with them.

Muhyiddin, also the deputy BN head, cited the Gerakan, MCA and MIC, which lost huge numbers of seats.

He urged the parties to address these issues in line with Umno's reforms, in order to strengthen BN for the 13th general election.

"We (Umno) know that if we do not do something to strengthen our party, what we fear (losing power) may come to pass. We took drastic action, we amended our constitution, we hold hundreds of courses... (to re-invigorate our machinery).

"We have done this because we acknowledge that our party have become weak," Muhyiddin related, adding that the weaknesses must be addressed in the face of a more informed, tech-savvy and smartphone-wielding public, who judge political parties at the speed of information spreading through the "real-time" social media that is faster than any news media.

However, he admitted, even such drastic actions to improve the party may take time to seep into a 61-year old organisation like Umno.

Touching on Umno's decision to only field the best and "winnable" candidates, Muhyiddin admitted that despite its best intentions, the part would continue to face "some limitations", as tradition was that the divisions would nominate the candidates to the party.

"We will have to consider conventions, traditions, respect and the divisional line-ups. Who is division chief, who is Pemuda chief, who is Wanita chief..." Muhyiddin said.

He repeated the party leadership's hopes that its members would, after their submitted names were vetted and a decision reached, respect the party's choice and support the persons chosen.

But in the main, the Pagoh MP stressed, paper qualifications alone would not be the criteria for a person to be an Umno "winnable" candidate.

Be like the American Jews, retirees told

Earlier, opening the dialogue session, Putrajaya Corporation president Aseh Che Mat said a small yet dedicated and cohesive band of influential people could decide the destiny of a country.

Aseh then used the example of the American Jews to urge former civil servants to ensure that the BN retains control of Putrajaya.

"The 700,000 government retirees can be the kingmakers in coming election, or 1.4 million of us if we count the spouses...

"I am sure we want to defend the (party which formed the) government which we upheld when in we served," Aseh told the pro-BN crowd.

The former home ministry secretary-general likened this to the phenomenon of the American Jews, who made up only seven percent of the US population, but could decide the outcome of its national politics.

While acknowledging that some of the more vocal former government officers have gone over to the opposition, Aseh said that these are only a handful of people in the armed forces, some former police officers and at least one former chief secretary to the government.

However, he added, most government retirees were working silently, and steadily, to engineer a BN win in GE13.

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