

Big plans will vanish if BN loses Johor, warns Najib

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JOHOR BN head Najib Abdul Razak has warned that the 'Johor way', together with the "big plans" of the incumbent state government, will "disappear" if Pakatan Rakyat takes power in the state.

He made the remark this morning when replying to a question about the 'Johor way', a term frequently used by state BN leaders to garner electoral support.

Najib said it refers to the inclusive policy adopted during the 18-year tenure of incumbent Menteri Besar Abdul Ghani Othman.

"The Johor way has been a very moderate and accommodating way. This is the birthplace of Umno but it is an Umno that takes care of all communities ... For example, the Chinese schools getting a lot of help, NGOs getting a lot of help (from the government)," Najib said.

"With this kind of style of leadership and policy embarked by BN in Johor, it has led to a long period of peace and harmony and political stability."

He was speaking at a press conference after attending a rally with BN supporters in Pekan Nenas.

Najib then appealed to Johoreans to factor in the 'Johor way' when casting their ballots.

"If that goes away, then whatever we have planned, big plans, big dreams for Johor would simply disappear, and that would be a sad day for Johor and for the people of Johor."

Najib expressed similar sentiments when addressing some 2,000 passionate supporters during the rally earlier.

"The core issue is, we must form a strong government ... when we form a strong government, god willing, the demands by (Tanjong Piai BN chief Md) Othman (Yusof) can be (implemented).

"Form a strong government first, only then we can talk. If there is no strong government, we cannot talk, right?" said a jovial Najib to a loud reply of "right"

from the floor.

Othman has earlier asked Najib to provide highways, public higher education institutions and affordable housing for the people of Tanjong Piai.

Najib promised on the spot that 1,000 affordable houses would be built in Tanjong Piai, but did not provide details.

He also called on voters to keep Johor a BN stronghold as a "farewell present" to incumbent Menteri Besar Abdul Ghani, who has moved from his Serom state seat to contest the Gelang Patah parliamentary constituency against DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang.

Pekan Nenas is a state seat under Tanjong Piai parliamentary constituency which could see DAP's first Malay MP since 1990 - political novice Mahdzir Ibrahim.

Mahdzir is contesting against former deputy youth and sports minister Wee Jock Seng, a popular politician known for his local service.

The BN defeated DAP's prominent Malay leader Ahmad Ton in 2008, with a whopping majority of 12,371 votes, and is likely to retain the seat based on strong support from Malay voters who make up 50 percent of the electorate.

The DAP is confident of wresting Pekan Nenas from BN due to the strong anti-establishment sentiment among Chinese voters, who make up 58 percent of the voters.

Booklets in Malay entitled 'Apa kata Anwar terhadap DAP' (What did Anwar say about DAP) were distributed during the rally.

The 16-page pocket-sized booklet compiles Anwar Ibrahim's remarks against the DAP while he was in the federal government.

The booklet does not state the name of either its printer or publisher, which is a violation of election laws.

'Target - to do better than in 2008'

Although mega ceramah organised by Pakatan Rakyat have received overwhelming support from Chinese voters in the state, Najib appeared in high spirits at the press conference.

"Never mind, this is democracy. We will work hard, the opposition will also work hard. We still have a few days. We'll see," he said when asked to comment on this.

"However, today I started (my visit to Johor) in Tanjong Piai and I feel the response is very encouraging. So we will continue our efforts until polling day."

Najib declined to state the number of seats that BN is targeting to win, saying that "numbers can be misleading and can always be contradicted by others".

He only revealed that the objective is to perform better than in 2008.

"We have a target of not being worse than 2008. This is our target and we will work hard to achieve our objective," he said, adding that BN has to double its efforts as Pakatan has made Johor its frontline battle ground.

Najib also commented that Pakatan has bigger problems compared to BN.

"We have managed to calm the situation over the issues of candidates. If we have problems, then the opposition has more problems.

"It is incorrect for me to say there is no problem (within BN) but I want to put it in the perspective that the opposition has even more problems."

He also singled out 'differences' among Pakatan parties in relation to ideology and stand on core issues.

"If you want to manage a government, you must have a strong coalition. The disputes show that Pakatan is not a viable and credible coalition to rule the country."

Both Najib and his deputy Muhyiddin Yassin were in Johor today to consolidate one of the last bastions of Umno in the peninsula.

This is Najib's first visit to the state since nominations were filed on April 20.

Some Chinese dailies have speculated that he will make a major announcement to the Chinese community at an event at Southern University College, a higher education institution established and funded by Chinese community, to prop up ebbing support.

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