

Najib's 'transformation' magic found wanting

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ANALYSIS In the final lap of the 15-day campaign period, BN has been depending heavily on its chief and caretaker Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to do the fire-fighting in Chinese and urban areas around the country to draw more support for the coalition.

However, his efforts may prove to be in vain as most of the goodies offered to Chinese community concerning their issues are seen to be too piecemeal and not enough to satisfy the strong desire for change stirring within in the community.

NONE From the nomination day itself, Najib has been keeping to a tight schedule around the country campaigning for the BN, far outdoing his deputy Muhyiddin Yassin in the frequency of appearance.

In past few days, he has covered all the frontline states, including Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, Johor and Penang, hoping to boost BN's chances in these states.

He has also pledged some election goodies for the Chinese community, especially allowing several conforming schools and an independent school to set up new branches, although he is now just a caretaker prime minister.

Other goodies included a promise to fix the Rawang high-tension electrical cable woes, relocating SMJK(C) Confucian to Rawang and the upgrading of Han Chiang College in Penang to a university college.

Most of these promises can only be kept if the BN is returned as the government or regains the states which fell to the Pakatan in 2008 general election.

Najib also used personal charm to woo the Chinese voters to support the coalition which has been in power for 56 years.

'Love me, love BN'

"You said you love the prime minister, I need you to vote for my colleagues who stand in Sibu, Lanang and all 222 parliamentary seats, who are contesting under the BN.

NONE "That's the way you can show me that you love me as prime minister," he

said in Sibu last Saturday.

Although his wife Rosmah Mansor has kept a low profile during the campaign, his children have been on the ground, even individually, to campaign for their father, projecting the feeling of a presidential election.

His youngest son Norashman, who can speak fluent Chinese, also appeared in a Chinese television advertisement to talk about Najib's "people first" concept.

However, the effects of Najib's efforts have been limited until today, as evidenced by the record breaking number of Chinese crowds in opposition ceramah around the country, and some unnecessary controversies also broke out during his tour around the country.

One incident was that of two students on duty at a launching ceremony for the Southern University College's new building being officially opened by Najib complained that members of the caretaker PM's entourage had allegedly molested them.

Piecemeal goodies vs structural reform

The college's head has apologised to the student body over the matter, though Najib has kept mum.

Chinese education groups have also complained that the series of announcement by Najib on Chinese schools were piecemeal and do not embrace structural reforms of the education system.

NONE" Najib's announcement (on the approval for Foon Yew High School to set up a second branch) could only partially solve the problem at Johor Bahru, " said Dong Zong in a statement.

It stressed that the government should reform its education policy, by allowing new independent schools to be established according to demand.

MCA also tried to play up the issue of the Islamic state, by advertising in major Chinese newspaper suggesting that Najib is against a theocratic state, but the effect is also seen as generating little impact.

The challenge facing Najib in luring Chinese support is that his "transformation" idea does not seem to be able to satisfy the strong desire for change in the Chinese community, especially among the middle class.

They are looking forward for a comprehensive reform of the country's administration to solve various issues, including the rising crime rate, inflation, corruption and an incompetent education system and it seems that only a change in federal government will satisfy the community.

Various groups from businessmen, intellectuals, parents and even singers and artistes have come out openly to issue statements supporting a change of government in Putrajaya in this polls.

Najib now has only the final 72 hours left to change the tide before the voters make their final decision on May 5.

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