

Imported from China: Najib's visit to new village
Malaysiakini.com
Feb 12, 2010
Kuek Ser Kuang Keng

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's scheduled visit to a Chinese new village during the coming Chinese New Year is being viewed as a political gimmick to woo back ebbing Chinese support, a trick probably learned from his counterparts in mainland China.

News commentator and former deputy news editor at Chinese daily *Nanyang Siang Pau* Koh Kok Wee pointed out that the political scenario after 2008 general elections - in which BN suffered its worst electoral - setback forced Najib to adopt a more 'people friendly' approach compared to his predecessors.



"During the era of (former prime minister) Mahathir Mohamad, when (the) BN regime was at its peak, Mahathir could ask the Chinese community to *kowtow* to him," he said.

However, Najib needs to abandon his elitism to recover the support of non-Malays who had turned to the opposition since the last general elections, said Koh.

PM with Malay votes only?



He added that although the conservative force in Umno had given up on the Chinese voters and was confident that Umno could continue to stay in power with only Malay votes, Najib realised he has to be a prime minister for all.

"He holds the premiership, he can't be a prime minister with only Malay votes... He needs the non-Malay votes more than any of his predecessors" Koh said, commenting on the popularity contest between Najib and Selangor Pakatan Rakyat government during this Chinese New Year.

Both sides have chosen to hold their celebrations on Feb 20 - the seventh day of Chinese New Year - in strategic locations 20km apart.

The Selangor state government is hosting its state level event at Dong Zen Temple, Jenjarom, a Buddhist temple famous for its annual lantern and flora festival meanwhile Najib is visiting Kampung Baru Pandamaran, the second largest Chinese new village in Malaysia.

Yesterday Najib made his third visit since becoming prime minister a year ago to Petaling Street, dubbed Kuala Lumpur's 'Chinatown'.

China experience showed positive feedback



Koh suspected Najib's visit to Chinese new villages during Chinese New Year, the first among all prime ministers, is inspired by Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, who used to visit low-income people in remote areas during festive season to boost their image.

Similar to Chinese experience, where the majority of the public who are poorly educated and with limited political consciousness respond positively to the gesture, Koh expected Najib to get the same result back here.

"Especially during Chinese New Year, the media will give wide coverage and the laymen will feel good about it."

"People may not feel (much about) government policy. However during festive seasons, these kinds of political gimmick, no matter how superficial they are, still give very good publicity result," he added.

New village a calculated plan

Koh also pointed out that Najib's selection of venue shows it is a carefully calculated plan. Kampung Baru Pandamaran is one of the earliest Chinese new villages in the country and is located in Selangor, which the BN is eyeing to reclaim.

The visit will also serve as BN's strongest weapon against the opposition's allegation that BN and Umno is practising racial politics.

"The visit shows that Najib is always putting his 1Malaysia spirit into practice," Koh added.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source :

<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/124283>

