

'We have kept our promises in Kedah'
New Straits Times
December 3, 2011

Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir on bringing change to state

Question: In your speech when debating the party president's keynote address on Thursday, you mentioned leading a 'Red Wave' movement to overcome Pakatan Rakyat's hold on Kedah. Can you elaborate?

Answer: The people in Kedah have realised that the party they voted for in 2008 has not kept its promises and let the voters down. They want a change now and we need to convince them that we are the ones who will bring about this change.

That is why I used the term "Red Wave" (Gelombang Merah), which is an idea taken from Umno Terengganu when it ended Pas' one-term rule of the state in 2004.

It is important to show that Barisan Nasional and Umno Kedah are ready to fulfil all our promises. We have kept all our pledges despite losing the state. For example, when we say that we will build mosques, we are actually doing it.

Question: What are the criteria of a winnable candidate, particularly in Kedah?

Answer: The criteria differ from constituency to constituency. What's important is the gender and age composition. Where there are large numbers of young voters, it does not mean we have to field someone young but it would help if the candidate could understand the aspirations of the young voters.

The voters must be able to identify with our candidate.

Another aspect is, candidates must ask themselves if they are really committed to serving the people.

Question: Datuk Seri Najib Razak has said that party leaders who have served too long must make way for new ones. What would be the reaction to this? What is Umno doing to convince them that change is needed?

Answer: Well, one must look into the mirror and see whether your services are really needed. Do you feel you can still command enough support to win the next general election?

It takes a real gentleman or a lady to admit "well, I may be winnable but perhaps I can also share that ability to win with someone else who can take over".

The issue of succession planning is the most difficult to do. Umno must explain to those dropped that this is not the end, and it is perhaps a new beginning.

It would be fantastic if those who have been leaders for a long time realise that "this is as far as I can go and perhaps it is time for someone else to take over the struggle, and I will continue to help in my own way from behind the scenes".

We have yet to reach that ideal situation. But if by the end of this assembly someone comes up and says, "I realise that this message is meant for me and if I should step down, then I would be happy to do so," it would leave all of us feeling really good.

Question: There is a general perception that the young people are not with the government. What should be done to engage them?

Answer: What's important is, we must explain to them what the government. There are many ways to do this, such as through social media. We must use this medium to get their feedback, ideas, perspective and criticism so that these youths feel engaged and appreciated.

The prime minister has come out with the noble idea of having a Youth Parliament. This is a positive move. I could never have thought of it, but it seems like an interesting opportunity.

Question: In your speech, you also mentioned foreign power intervention in the opposition parties. How do you back this claim?

Answer: You look at the websites, the likes of the National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Institute, Open Society and the George Soros Foundation.

They admit that they are involved in some activities in various countries for the so-called promotion of democracy.

It is all about funding the opposition and sometimes funding activities that are seen from the exterior as innocent, issues such as human rights, right to expression, free and fair elections, and anti-corruption.

These are all noble campaigns which should not be monopolised by anyone. But it turns out to be that all these causes are just means to attract public attention.

When you dig deeper, you find that the people backing these causes are those who have no right to talk about human rights.

That is why I raised this matter. Let the people think about it and do their own investigation.

Copyright © 2011 The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad.

Source: <http://www.nst.com.my/local/umno/we-have-kept-our-promises-in-kedah-1.14208>