

## **Najib injects new strength into troops**

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**By A. Jalil Hamid**

### **His speech wraps up defining week for Umno**

Without a doubt, Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak roused the emotions of his troops as he delivered a rallying cry yesterday at the end of the Umno annual general assembly that preceded a general election expected within months.

This could not have been a better close to an intense and a defining week for Umno and Malaysian politics. With so much at stake, Najib has to ensure a united and cohesive Umno as he leads Barisan Nasional into a general election for the first time as prime minister.

In one of the most inspired closing speeches at an Umno general assembly, Najib also sent a strong message to the 12.4 million voters on why they should return BN, which has a proven track record, to power and reject the opposition.

He was also determined to put an end to internal bickering within Umno especially over the selection of election candidates. At the end, the crowd gave him a standing ovation and took a pledge of unity.

If there were any shortcomings in his opening address, it was more than made up with his off-the-cuff remarks yesterday.

Someone noted that the prime minister was in his element when he spoke directly to the people, putting aside his text.

Undoubtedly, the closing speech was a psychological war to prepare the rank and file for the battle ahead. If the opening message was about unity and discipline, the closing message was about preparing for the general election and being clear about what Umno stands for against the disparate opposition.

There is now a renewed confidence in the party, which was bruised in the 2008 general election, following a transformation process driven by Najib himself. That confidence level should rise further after yesterday.

What was more remarkable yesterday was the great chemistry displayed between Najib and his deputy, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, on the stage and in their speeches.

Muhyiddin appealed to the audience with his Islamic credentials and the "historic" pledge and Najib topped it up with his inspired closing speech. The audience was so impressed with the compatibility between the two.

In his 45-minute-long speech, Najib launched an attack on Parti Keadilan Rakyat, the weakest link in the three-party Pakatan Rakyat, and the Parti Islam se-Malaysia (Pas). Both parties predominantly comprise Malays.

In a message to the wider Malay audience, he warned them of the perils of not voting for Umno or BN, arguing that the Malays were better off under BN rule.

It was clear from Najib, Muhyiddin or the vice-presidents that Umno is looking for an election victory of a comfortable margin, while at the same time they do not under-rate the opposition's strength.

The key thing is that the Umno assembly has instilled confidence and psyched up its members to fight for victory in the general election.

Other BN component parties should take the cue from Umno and start to galvanise their members for the battle ahead.

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