

Najib: 'Winnable Candidate' Must Be Acceptable To Majority Of Voters, Party Machinery
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 26 (Bernama) -- A winnable candidate must be someone who is acceptable to the majority of voters in a constituency and also by the party machinery as well, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Najib explained that if the party machinery rejects someone who has the ability or track record, that person will not succeed and in the end the party will lose both the seat and power.

"If we as party members are not open minded and insist that a person must be a candidate based on party hierarchy even though our candidate might not win, then what'll happen is that our candidate will fail," he said to Bernama during an exclusive interview in conjunction with the upcoming 2011 Umno General Assembly, here Saturday.

The Umno president emphasised the importance of everyone in the party to understand what was meant by 'winnable candidate', which would be highlighted during the elections.

"Otherwise it'll be tough to succeed. If the winnable candidate is put forth by a group within a certain division without considering the wishes of the majority of voters, that candidate would also not succeed," said Najib.

He admitted that it was difficult to please everyone, especially at the Umno divisional level, but said "the winnable candidate formula was to give each contested seat the best chance to win."

However, he said the selection of candidates was not finalised yet and the evaluation would be made objectively and not just subjectively.

"This is most important. The candidate we select should not be someone we like personally but someone who can be accepted by a majority of voters in the said area. That's what we must do," he elaborated.

He said the question of deciding on a candidate was very challenging and difficult and it was impossible for the party to please everyone.

"In my 35 years of experience in politics, it has never happened in an election," he added.

"But whatever decisions the party makes, ultimately we have to accept the party's decision as a party member, even if it's not to our liking," he said.

He described his many experiences where people loyal to the party accepted the party's decisions even though they did not like it, which finally led to the candidate winning.

"On the other hand if they continue to object and say whatever happens, I want to contest. That means they're not loyal to the party and the candidate loses, which means the party loses. They should realise that when the party loses it means we'll lose power," he asserted.

Najib also admitted that even at the divisional level party members did not see eye-to-eye on the best candidate and said that what they needed was party discipline.

"Meaning, when it's time to make the decision on candidate selection, it should be accepted, supported and defended by each member of the party," he said.

It was vital to consider the criteria for candidate selection following the 2008 general election which saw Barisan Nasional and Umno losing five states and it was a lesson that should never be forgotten, said Najib.

Using the analogy of the Harimau Muda (Young Tigers) team which resolutely bagged the football gold medal at the SEA Games in Jakarta last week despite facing a stiff challenge, he said Umno also needed to have mental and physical strength for the elections.

"If we have the mental strength and if we are resolute, we'll be able to thrive in a very challenging environment even when our enemies are exerting pressure on us, be it psychological or emotional pressure."

"If we are determined and strong-willed, then, like what the Young Tigers have proven, we will be able to triumph over the immense pressure put on us and even though it is not a level playing field, as in Jakarta, our team finally made it," he said.

Touching on the subject of young voters, he said it has been proven in the by-elections of the past two years that the majority of this group supported Umno.

"Meaning, it has been proven that young people are not necessarily anti-establishment or not supportive of the party that represents the government, namely the Barisan Nasional (BN). They'll evaluate who has a better understanding of their needs and aspirations as young people," he said.

He said the Umno Youth and Puteri wings should be caring in their struggle on behalf of the younger generation.

He gave as an example the 1Malaysia People's Housing Scheme (PR1MA), which was mooted to the government by the BN Youth lab.

Such matters requires the consideration of the government and the government of the day is mindful of the needs and demands of the younger generation, he reiterated.

"So, even though I'm not young...I feel young nonetheless (laughter), it means we must make adjustments when approaching young people, which is also the case when it comes to women, senior citizens, middle-income group and various other groups within society," he said.

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