

**Umno to counter Pakatan Hari Raya blitz with grassroots campaign**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**August 14, 2011**  
**By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 14 — Umno leaders have dismissed Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) pre-election campaign strategy for Hari Raya, expressing confidence that their grassroots strength alone is enough to curb their political foes from influencing people during the festive occasion.

The federal opposition revealed recently that it planned on campaigning for the Malay vote ahead of the next general elections by distributing specially-prepared information kits, pamphlets and CDs to rural folk in kampungs during Hari Raya.

The plan, according to PR leaders like Azmin Ali would be to trumpet PR's reform agenda in areas they believe has limited access to information. PR leaders have said they would make full use of the Hari Raya holidays to participate in "balik kampung" programmes aimed at spreading the "PR word".

Umno leaders remain unimpressed by PR's plans, and will launch a counter-offensive grassroots campaign to rebut any allegations brought by the opposition. The same leaders have also claimed that PR's pre-polls strategies were "not new" and that Umno had already utilised similar campaign tactics in the past.

"The difference between Pakatan and Umno is that they are just planning these campaigns now. We have already been engaging with people on the grassroots level throughout the year. Our major concern is that the information given by Pakatan on current issues like Bersih and the economy is misleading...therefore we have our own networking system all set up and ever ready to go," Umno MP Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan told The Malaysian Insider.

Umno's advantage over PR, claimed the Kota Belud MP was its grassroots machinery — where the party has over 20,000 branches throughout the entire country with the exception of Sarawak.

"Umno has an established networking system, whether there is elections or not. We have over 20,000 branches in the country, even in areas where the MP or assemblyman is from MCA or MIC. Even in Pakatan Rakyat stronghold areas like Jelutong, we have our own branches- to make the dissemination of information and campaigning smooth.

"Go to almost any part of Malaysia and you will find an Umno branch, even in opposition strongholds. This is because we are ready, when Pakatan makes a mistake or fails to attend to the needs of their constituents, we will take up that responsibility," said Abdul Rahman.

The Barisan Nasional (BN) backbencher said that Umno cemented BN's manifestos through localised programmes like community gotong-royong events as well as local cooking classes organised by the Malay party.

"We have our fact sheets and CDs as well. What PR is doing is not rocket science...Azmin himself used to be an Umno guy, most of Pakatan's strategies are our (Umno)'s inventions," added Abdul Rahman.

Umno supreme council member Datuk Idris Harun told The Malaysian Insider that the party grassroots will “focus” on ceramahs and other social gatherings during the Ramadan month to list down the various problems faced by PR — from state government issues to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim’s sex video and on-going sodomy trial.

“We will explain and point out the wrongdoings of PR, and how they are being pure opportunists using issues like Bersih and the price hikes to get voter support. Umno needs to show people that the opposition is irresponsible, of how they are willing to jeopardise national security through protests to get votes.

“We will explain, to make rural folk understand that some issues like price hikes for instance is a global phenomenon and that the government is doing their best to address this issue,” said the Tangga Batu MP.

Idris admitted that Umno had been too “complacent” with its campaign strategy before 2008, which resulted in BN being denied its customary two-thirds majority.

“We will not be complacent this time around. Every vote counts,” he added.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/umno-to-counter-pakatan-har-i-raya-blitz-with-grassroots-campaign/>