

Najib eyes key Chinese vote with double visit to Penang
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By Jahabar Sadiq

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 25 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak will make a push for the crucial Chinese vote in Penang with two visits in a span of five days, in hopes of winning back the state from Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

The Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman is due to take part in a cycling event today and coalition sources say the prime minister will give at least RM500,000 to each Chinese school in the state now run by PR Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng.

“There are two significant visits for the prime minister to Penang this week. The cycling event on Sunday and a visit to the Han Chiang School on Thursday,” a BN source told The Malaysian Insider.

“He will give the Chinese schools some money,” he added, noting that the Chinese are the majority in urban seats which seem to support BN’s political foes.

Guan Eng, who just returned from a visit of Australia, is due to attend both events as is his predecessor, Gerakan president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

Najib (picture), who now has a new team of image consultants who had helped former British PM Tony Blair win elections, has been visiting various states every weekend in what is seen as a prelude to the next elections widely expected within a year.

The prime minister, who is big on symbolism, will address large gathering at the Han Chiang school which was the venue of the big opposition bash just two days before Election 2008 when BN lost our more states and 82 federal seats.

Sources also say that several well known Chinese businessmen have indicated that they can help win PR state assemblymen over to BN. PR holds 29 out of the 40 seats in the state assembly.

But it is unclear whether these businessmen have the pull or whether these are self serving statements of corporate figures eyeing government largesse.

“The PM is eyeing the Chinese vote because it is crucial if BN wants to take back Penang,” an Umno official said.

Najib has made it clear he wants to win back both Penang and Selangor, the country’s top two industrialised and wealthy states, in the next general election.

Under the PR governments, Penang and Selangor have seen a rise in investments with the island state notching RM12.23 billion and the central state getting RM10.64 billion last year.

Selangor has also increased its cash reserves by some RM200 million in the first half of 2011, bringing the total to RM1.1 billion which Mentri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim said was the highest in 28 years.

The prime minister has told his Umno party and BN to win back support in all opposition-held states with Putrajaya approving increased allocations for its lawmakers to spend in their wards.

He has also announced the repeal of several security and media laws, including the Internal Security Act (ISA) last week in a move to win over Malaysians upset over curbs in civil liberties and the crackdown of the July 9 Bersih 2.0 rally calling for free and fair elections.

Najib, who is also Finance Minister, is due to unload more goodies in his Budget 2012 speech on October 7 including possible hefty bonus or pay rises for civil servants as part of his strategy to win back support in the next election which must be held by 2013.

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