

BN says polls focus will be on young voters
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 — Barisan Nasional (BN) will focus on winning over young voters who it said may be the determining factor for the upcoming general election, which is expected to be the stiffest in Malaysian history.

BN leaders said today the ruling coalition is undergoing a paradigm shift where, unlike previous years, it will actively woo young voters who have yet to make up their mind on who to support.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak spent almost an entire day at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) today, where he gave a speech at the closing of the BN Youth Job Fair and the 1 Malaysia social media foundation.

"BN is a winnable brand. BN is a party which has been tested and proven its capability to govern," Najib said to youths attending the fair.

The Umno president stressed the BN government was one that cared for them, and the success of the jobs fair proved youths were "supporting" the country's oldest coalition.

Najib also delivered a special address (Amanat) to Umno Youth and Puteri Umno delegates in a closed-door session, ahead of the party's general assembly at the end of the month.

The Umno president's speech, according to Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin, touched on the direction Umno and BN must take to ensure support among young voters "swings back" to BN.

"This is the first time there is an 'amanat' for the Umno Youth and Puteri Umno just before the party general assembly. The president's speech was focused on the direction (BN should take) to ensure young voters support us.

"Acknowledgment has been given to what we (Youth wings) have done, it's just that the president has asked us to incorporate additional touch points to ensure young voters swing to BN," the Rembau MP told reporters here.

Khairy said the Umno Youth wing also unveiled a new slogan today: "BN pilihan orang muda" (BN, the choice of the young).

"All our efforts will be focused on that slogan. We want to show young Malaysian voters that the choice is in their hands, and what BN has to offer," he said.

The Umno leader said that BN's events today alone showed that it was serious and determined to winning back young voters.

"In the last few by-elections they came back to us. Our push is very serious," Khairy added.

As at July last year, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) was leading in the voter registration drive, signing up twice the number of voters compared with Barisan Nasional (BN) in the first six months

of 2010.

The DAP was also leading in signing up more voters compared with other political parties, registering 32.5 per cent of the new 169,838 voters registered between January and June last year.

Umno followed, registering 32.3 per cent of the new voters, with PAS at 22.7 per cent.

PR was also ahead of BN in registering voters in Johor, seen as an Umno stronghold. PR registered almost 60 per cent of the new voters registered by political parties.

But equities research firm Nomura said in a recent report that an estimated increase of 3.2 million new voters by the first quarter of 2013 could make the outcome of the next general election highly unpredictable.

The research house said that when combined with the 2.58 million registered voters who did not turn up at Election 2008, the increase in new voters could reach 9.43 million.

The huge increase in new voters was very significant, Nomura said, and likely to intensify competition, given the narrow margin of victory — a mere 384,688 votes — of the ruling BN coalition in terms of the popular vote in 2008.

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