

Zambry: Perak Umno 'moving in right direction'
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 29 — Perak Umno appears confident that public anger over its controversial 2009 takeover of Perak has calmed, with Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir claiming tonight the party is "moving in the right direction".

The Pangkor assemblyman told reporters that the state's Umno leadership has "strengthened" since it took over the reins of the state government and was ready to face the coming polls.

"Thank God... We are moving in the right direction. We have strengthened ourselves," a smiling Zambry (picture) said when met after Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak delivered a special pre-general assembly briefing to top party leaders here.

Zambry would not however directly express confidence that Barisan Nasional (BN) would retain the northern state in the coming polls but repeatedly said "thank God, thank God" when asked if things were looking positive for the pact.

"I do not want to say that I am confident because I would not be a good general then," he coyly said.

He said Perak BN representatives have been "preparing our ground well" but stressed that it would be up to the voters to decide on their performance.

Asked again if he felt public rage from the year-long 2009 constitutional impasse had subsided, Zambry smiled and said "pretty much".

"But I do not want to be over-confident and self-proclaim that we are this or that... I'd like to move in a tactical or strategic way," he said.

"But I can tell you this — we know the ground well."

Zambry also agreed with Najib who had purportedly told delegates during the briefing to stand united in the face of what he predicted would be an "extraordinary" general election.

"We are facing an environment that is unusual. So, yes, we need more unusual moves to prepare for this.

"If you are not a winnable candidate, you have to sacrifice for the sake of the party," he said.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) had won 31 seats in the 59-seat Perak assembly in the March 2008 general election and in January 2009, Bota assemblyman Datuk Nasarudin Hashim defected from Umno to PKR.

However, he returned to Umno in early February at the same time as three assemblymen left PR and backed BN as independents.

This allowed Zambry to be sworn in as menteri besar on February 6, 2009.

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