

Najib moves to quell anti-Taib sentiment in Sarawak
The Malaysian Insider
By Clara Chooi
April 10, 2011

KUCHING, April 10 — Clearly sensing the people's growing disenchantment with Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, Datuk Seri Najib Razak's first message in his campaign tonight was to reassure Sarawakians that a change in the state's leadership was imminent.

The prime minister spoke at a 1 Malaysia rally at the Kuching South City Council Indoor Stadium here and urged the people not be "worried" as Taib had already agreed to step down in due time.

Though response was relatively lukewarm throughout Najib's speech, shouts were heard from the crowd of about 1,000 people all garbed in 1 Malaysia T-shirts at the mention of Taib's impending retirement.

"Believe me, believe in me, when the time is right, we carry this out. Do not be hasty and believe in the opposition's lies," Najib said in his speech.

He pledged that a change in the state's top leadership was on the cards, adding that a "sudden change" would lead Sarawak into a state of uncertainty.

"Ladies and gentlemen, do not worry. We have made plans so that a change will happen in the Sarawak top leadership, a planned and organised change.

"If we make a shock change, a state of uncertainty will ensue," he said.



Shouts emanated from the crowd of about 1,000 when Taib's impending retirement was mentioned. — Pic by Choo Choy May

But the BN chairman stuck to the coalition's playbook by poking fun at PR's top leaders, pointing out that if the pact's argument to remove Taib was due to the latter's advanced years, the opposition front too had a number of aged leaders.

"If they are talking about age, they too have many old leaders. I would like to ask ... (DAP adviser) Lim Kit Siang, how many years has he been in politics? Forty -two years in politics. He is not new at this, he has been around for a long time and he is 72-years-old.

"What about (PAS spiritual leader Datuk Seri) Nik Aziz (Nik Mat)? He is even older — 80-years-old. Haji Hadi (PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang) is how old?

“Even Anwar Ibrahim is old though he does not want to admit it,” he said, laughing.

Najib added that Anwar was a man with many problems and such a person could not lead any government or the country.

“How could he be the opposition leader? And he wants to be the prime minister but he has so many problems, how can he?” he said, in an obvious reference to Anwar’s ongoing sodomy case and allegations that he had sex with a prostitute which was captured on tape.

Najib also dredged up Anwar’s infamous September 16 government takeover promise, telling the audience that the episode was proof of the opposition leader’s penchant for lying.

He recalled that the former deputy prime minister had even claimed to have received the blessings from the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to be the next prime minister.

“But the Agong did not even know. These were all lies. If he lies to the people, then he cannot be the Prime Minister,” he said.



Najib shakes hands with supporters as he enters the indoor stadium. — Pic by Choo Choy May

Najib warned Sarawakians not to do something that they would later regret and pledged that if given an even bigger mandate come April 16, the BN government would ensure that the state would become even more developed.

“Give us four to five years, we will change the Sarawak landscape. I believe this will become a reality because in just the past one year alone, we have already seen tremendous changes under the BN leadership.

“So I hope, together in the spirit of 1 Malaysia, we can make sure that our BN candidates win on April 16 and we will form a new government in Sarawak, endorsed by the BN; a Sarawak BN government that is more competent to help us make a huge transformation in the state,” he concluded.

Sarawak helped form Malaysia in 1963 and its ruling parties helped form BN in 1974 with the then ruling Alliance. Opposition politicians have charged BN with squandering riches in the resource-rich state for themselves rather than the people in the state which is almost as large as the Malay peninsula.

The BN’s campaign in Sarawak is said to be haunted by allegations of corruption and abuse of power against the Taib regime.

PR parties have been quick to fan the anti-Taib sentiment that was already spreading steadily across the hornbill state months before the polls were announced.

When met, several BN candidates had even admitted that they would have an uphill battle to convince voters that Taib would soon leave and a new breed of BN leaders would take his place in government.

But for the urban communities residing in the capital cities across the state, this is likely insufficient to convince them.

Sarawak will go to the polls this April 16 and as the campaign period entered its halfway mark today, talk is that while BN may recapture the state, long considered its fixed deposit, the ruling pact would also suffer embarrassing defeats in many of its electoral strongholds.

Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider

Source : <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najib-moves-to- quell-anti-taib-sentiment-in-sarawak/>