

**Mustapa On How To Win Kelantan
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By Mohamad Bakri Darus**

KOTA BAHARU, Jan 29 (Bernama) -- Kelantan Umno liaison chief Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed has spelled out several key factors which are crucial to Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) in its quest to win back Kelantan from PAS in the 13th general election.

Mustapa, who foresees the coming polls to be the most intense ever in the country's election history, said Kelantan Umno and BN must be strong to be able to enter the fray and emerge the winner.

"Alhamdulillah our leader, (Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is strong and so is his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin; but that is not enough if Kelantan Umno and BN are not strong. Everyone of us should be strong because only then people will accept us," he said in an interview with Bernama here.

Mustapa, who is Jeli member of parliament and International Trade and Industry Minister, said the choice of candidates would be "extremely important" in winning back Kelantan after 22 years of PAS' rule.

PAS wrested Kelantan from the BN in 1990. In the 12th general election in 2008, PAS won 30 state seats, BN won six, and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), one. PAS also won nine parliamentary seats, PKR won three and BN, two.

Mustapa said although it has not been finalised yet, Kelantan Umno has come up with a list of "winnable candidates" for the election.

"In the past, there might have been some miscalculations in several areas. Generally, the candidates were good but might not be suitable to be fielded in certain areas and that was why we lost in those seats," he said.

This time around, he said, Umno should be more careful and field only those who are truly capable of winning.

"This concept of winnable candidates is not just about being popular in Umno but also about being accepted by all. If they are popular only in Umno, then they will lose for sure. They should not contest; because they will lose the battle on the very first day," he said.

"Winnable candidates are those who are popular with the people, non-governmental organisations, civil servants, police, the armed forces, veterans and so on."

"They must be able to attract the interest of people," Mustapa said. "They must have the 'oomph' -- the wow factor -- to attract people; not just Umno people but all the voters, fence-sitters or otherwise."

It was therefore crucial, he said, for Kelantan Umno members and leaders to accept the decision of party leadership on the choice of candidates and not resort to the "chah keting"

practice or back-stabbing if they are not chosen because this would mean giving advantage to the opponents.

Those who aspire to become candidates should assess their own capabilities and not try assert themselves because this might prove to be counter-productive.

"Those who try to do so would normally be rejected. If one asserts himself as someone who is qualified, it maybe because he is not," he said, adding that Umno was aware of the fact that there might be many winnable candidates in an area, making it difficult to choose the right one.

"So we choose the best among the winnables," he added.

The rest of the winnable candidates should be patient and accept the reality that the party can only choose one, he said.

"Don't do anything detrimental to the party, don't resort to sabotage. It's important to have discipline because in this fight, we want to win."

"If we resort to rebellious attitude and sabotage, this will weaken the party and our struggle to wrest back Kelantan from PAS will be rendered futile," he said.

Observers have been alluding to the fact that Umno lost Kelantan in 1990 not due to the strength of PAS but because the party had been weakened by the practice of "chah keting" by those who failed to get posts at the divisional level and boycotted their own divisions' election campaign.

To win the 13th general election, Mustapa said, all divisional leadership including the Youth, Wanita and Puteri should work as a team with one objective -- to win Kelantan.

He said the "red wave" -- a movement launched last year to galvanise party members and supporters to win Kelantan -- had lifted the spirit of party members and leaders.

"It has united us to fight under a common objective -- to ensure BN emerges the winner," he said, stressing that in-fightings, which had caused the people to distance themselves from Umno, should be stopped at once.

Umno leaders at all levels should get down to the grassroots not just when there were events involving the government or party, he added.

They should also be proactive and make their own initiatives to reach out to the people, and not just relying on the initiatives of state Umno leaders, so that the people would be able to feel their touch, he said.

They should meet as many groups of people as possible, including NGOs, civil servants, government retirees, farmers, fishermen, traders and the young so that they will be able to feel that Umno cares for their plights, Mustapa said.

"We are proud of Wanita Umno's 'Jalinan Rakyat' programme where the members have been visiting party divisions and villages. This has been the neatest of machinery, with one member taking care of 10 families," he said.

Information machinery should also be strengthened so that government policies can be

accurately disseminated, he said.

"Information is important. If people are deprived of it, they cannot be blamed for having a skewed view towards us and becoming easily influenced by the opposition's lies and propaganda," he said.

"Twenty-two years is a period too long under an opposition's rule. I'm confident that if we are united and loyal to the leadership, the BN will return to power in Kelantan come the 13th general election," he said.

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