

Young Voters Key To Spdp Survival In Sarawak

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MIRI, March 4 (Bernama) -- It remains to be seen whether the Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) can recover before the 13th general election but the 10-year-old party can count on young voters to ensure their survival.

Head of Publication Division of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) Dr Ahi Sarok said SPDP had to work hard to convince the younger voters who are mostly fence sitters.

"SPDP needs to focus on the young voters. They need to engage the youths in their programmes. In addition, they should also get more professionals to be their members and elect these members as their EXCO," he told Bernama, here today.

He said these young leaders should be exposed and there must be a succession plan in SPDP for the top leadership.

"Leaders who lost in the previous state election must be willing to give way to the young blood," he said.

Coming up from the ashes of bitter disputes with five elected representatives the internal strife has been resolved with those who had either quit the party or were sacked for insubordination.

The five are Datuk Sylvester Entri Muran (Marudi), Datuk Peter Nansian Ngusie (Tasik Biru), Rosey Yunus (Bekenu), Paulus Palu Gumbang (Batu Danau) and Mas Gading MP Datuk Dr Tiki Lafe.

Dr Ahi proposed that the role of SPDP Putera and Puteri should be enhanced before the poll.

"The Putera and Puteri leaders must be given a fair share in the party top management for the party to remain relevant, it was reported about 30 percent of the voters are those between 21 to 40 years old," he said.

"It is therefore crucial for any political parties which want to win the general election to engage these voters in their programmes and activities," he said.

For the coming Triennial General Assembly (TGA), Dr Ahi said the main agenda should be strengthening the party, filling the important posts left vacant by five who have left SPDP and may need to fill these posts with capable and knowledgeable leader.

He said to attract the young voters to vote for their candidates, the party must rope in the young leaders to hold important and strategic posts in the party.

"If these groups are left out, it is feared that the young voters may abandon BN (Barisan Nasional) and this could have far reaching implications to BN in the next general election,"

he said.

SPDP Triennial General Assembly (TGA) will be held on March 17 and 18 at Bintulu Civic Centre with more than 800 delegates expected to converge.

He said other BN component parties like Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), The Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) and Parti Rakyat Sarawak should emulate SPDP efforts in setting up the party Putera and Puteri wings.

For the coming general election, he said SPDP would have to work extra hard if they wanted to retain all the four parliamentary seats, citing Mas Gading parliamentary constituency had to make known its winnable candidate so that he or she can start to canvass support from the electorate, he said.

"By merely naming four winnable candidates won't do any good as the four would be jostling. As for Saratok, the main reason why BN lost in the state constituency of Krian was because there were promises that the incumbent could not fulfill and the opposition had been harping on these unfulfilled promises, he said.

"Apart for that, there is also the incumbent syndrome. The voters want incumbents who are not able to perform and fulfill their promises not to be elected anymore. This happened in Krian. In the Baram parliamentary seat, the two state seats (Marudi and Telang Usang) in the constituency, were held by SPDP and PBB respectively," he said.

"The seat is one of the biggest in the state after Hulu Rejang. In the 2011 state election, the assemblyman just managed to secure slightly more than 30 percent of the total votes cast. Had there been a two-corner fight in Telang Usang, the opposition could have won.

Apart from the internal crisis, there are many other unresolved issues in Baram, NCR issues, logging and also development issues. The Lapok Road and the NCR land issues are always ever green issues which the opposition will harp on.

"If SPDP wins in these four constituencies the majority will be reduced," he said.

In the coming election, SPDP will defend Mas Gading, Saratok, Bintulu and Baram parliamentary seats.

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