

Is Penang BN Ready For Election?

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GEORGE TOWN, March 5 (Bernama) -- Never a day passes without the people asking the question, "When is the election?"

And there seems to be a standard answer for this: "Very soon, it's just around the corner."

The fact is, no one knows when the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, will dissolve parliament to pave the way for the 13th general election, and he has until April 28 next year to decide.

The more pertinent question, therefore, is not about when is the election, but "are you ready to face it?"

This was the very question Najib asked during a dinner in Sungai Petani recently, asking those present, "Are all of you ready to face the election? Are you ready if the election is called anytime?"

The operative word is "ready".

And the weight of the word becomes even more profound if one weighs the prime minister's remarks previously when he described the coming polls as an extraordinary election which requires the BN to work in an extraordinary way to obtain extraordinary results.

In Penang, it is not something impossible for the BN to win back the seats it lost to the opposition pact in the last general election, provided, of course, if they are willing to work extraordinarily hard.

In the 2008 polls, BN won 11 of 40 state seats and two out of 13 parliamentary seats up for grabs in the state.

DAP dominated all the Chinese-majority seats and won all 18 seats contested either by the MCA and Gerakan. Parti Keadilan Rakyat won 10 and PAS, one.

Of the 40 state seats, Umno contested 15 and won 11 while Gerakan, MCA and MIC contested 12, 11 and two seats respectively, and lost all of them.

Theoretically, for the BN to win Penang, it has to win more than half of the Chinese-majority seats and strive to regain the support of the Indian community.

Obviously, according to University Sains Malaysia lecturer Dr Sivamurugan Pandian, BN cannot rely on rhetoric.

They should be able to feel the heartbeat of the people, and not bicker with one another, he said.

"Internal crises were among the contributing factors for the defeat of MCA and Gerakan in the last election and if this is repeated, then, the BN will never be able to recapture Penang."

To win back Penang, Umno has to retain its existing 11 seats and MCA and Gerakan must work to regain at least five seats each, and MIC, one seat.

Theoretically, this is workable owing to the dissatisfaction among electors in several Pakatan-held seats.

On the other hand, Gerakan of today is not the Gerakan of 2008.

The party appears to have now solved its internal crisis, with president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon announcing that he would not contest in the coming polls.

At the state level, Gerakan, led by Dr Teng Hock Nan, has been moving actively among the grassroots.

Penang MCA, headed by Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen, should also get down to the field more often and meet the Chinese community to get them to support the BN.

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