

BN hasn't won over young voters yet, says Khir Toyo
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SHAH ALAM, April 9 — The Najib administration has yet to win over young voters as cash handouts and goodies from the government have not benefited them, Dr Mohd Khir Toyo has said.

The former Selangor menteri besar said while cash handouts did generate a “feel-good factor” among Malaysians, it was only felt and appreciated by voters above the age of 50.

An offer by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to forgive federal study loans if Pakatan Rakyat (PR) takes power is also putting pressure on the Barisan Nasional (BN) government.

Khir (picture) warned that the BN government had a daunting task ahead — how to attract voters between the ages of 21 and 50, many of whom have become “fed up of politics.”

“I think the feel-good factor is there but only limited to voters who are 50 and above...they have already decided who they want to vote for.

“Those from 30 to 50 are still undecided, but more dangerous are the ones from 21 to 30 who are not interested in politics at all,” he told The Malaysian Insider in an exclusive interview recently.

“I told the prime minister (Datuk Seri Najib Razak) voters between ages 21 and 30 are a problem. They cannot benefit from BR1M... how do you tackle this group,” Khir said, referring to the Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia scheme.

Najib had announced the RM500 aid for households earning less than RM3,000 a month in his budget speech last October, saying it would help ease the burden from surging cost of living.

The unprecedented handout for an estimated 5.3 million households is set to cost RM2.3 billion. The PM said last month that 80 per cent, or 3.74 million out of 4.78 million households, had successfully applied for BR1M as of March 1, amounting to RM1.92 billion being disbursed.

Proof of lack of support towards BN, said Khir, was how “not every youth” supported the coalition’s youth wing groups such as Umno Youth.

Khir said that while handouts and any form of government aid were “welcome”, younger voters demanded long-term solutions to issues concerning rising costs of living.

“Professional young voters 40 and below are a critical group, they are getting tired, because we are facing so many problems... essentially the gap between cost of living and income.

“There is not a real solution given by the leaders, both either Pakatan Rakyat or the

government," added Khir, and cited Anwar's promise to lower fuel prices if PR takes over federal power.

"If Anwar says he wants to lower oil prices, I don't think sugar prices will go down, roti canai prices won't go down.

"Some issues that need to be addressed are cheap public transportation... I know the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is being built but in the interim period what is being done to improve transport?" asked Khir.

The Sungai Panjang state assemblyman said he meets up with young voters "regularly" and most of them have told him that they were tired of politics and politicians from both sides of the political divide "demonising" each other.

"People are getting fed up," he said, before ending the interview.

BN faced its worst electoral result in the 2008 general election when it lost five states to Pakatan Rakyat as well as its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament.

But Prime Minister Najib has indicated that he will soon call a general election, saying that confidence in his BN has surged of late.

The Malaysian Insider understands elections can be held as early as June with Parliament expected to be dissolved in mid-May.

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