

BN bracing for tougher fight in GE13, young leaders say
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By Hafidz Baharom

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 7 — Winning a strong mandate in the next general election will be harder due to the changing attitudes and weaker support from voters — especially the younger generation — in Pakatan Rakyat (PR) states, say several Barisan Nasional (BN) youth leaders.

The leaders were commenting on BN chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's hope for a strong mandate in the polls in order to continue his reforms and make Malaysia a fully developed nation by 2020.

Putrajaya Umno Youth chief Datuk Zaki Zahid said while several surveys show BN leading, support for the ruling coalition is just between "strong" and "not too strong".

"A recent survey done among young people by ourselves, (Umno Youth chief) Khairy Jamaluddin included, shows that our support among youth has reduced. I would say we will win with a decent mandate, but to achieve a 'strong' mandate will be hard work," Zaki told The Malaysian Insider.

MIC information chief S. Vell Paari echoed similar views to The Malaysian Insider, adding that winning a strong mandate or a two-thirds parliamentary majority was hard.

"If you ask me, the current generation of voters are a lot more astute politically, so it is going to be hard for us.

"We will return to power with a slightly better majority, but that majority is going to be hard," said Vell Paari.

MCA Youth chief Datuk Wee Ka Siong (right) said that winning with a strong mandate would not as easy as before, especially with PR ruling in four states.

"The prime minister has been working hard but he needs help from all sides, and while he does have the support, that needs to be translated to votes for BN.

"While the prime minister is well-liked, but people may not vote for us due to local factors," Wee told The Malaysian Insider.

He added that there was much left to do, such as countering the attacks from PR.

"We must work hard. And we must find an effective way to influence voters in (PR) states," Wee said.

In the "CNBC Conversation" programme aired yesterday, Najib said the next five years were "very crucial" for the government to fulfil the commitments and promises made by previous leaders to the nation.

"I'd like to have a strong mandate, [CNBC host Martin Soong]. Because to achieve our vision of a fully developed nation by 2020, the next five years would be very crucial. Crucial, because you're talking about the last lap.

"You're talking about going down the stretch and this is the most critical part because we really have to deliver," he was quoted as saying by national news agency Bernama.

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