

## **Sabahans revel in BN govt's pledges**

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**By Zubaidah Abu Bakar**

IT was not even 5.30am in Kudat, Sabah, on the northern tip of Borneo island. There were people on the streets, some enjoying breakfast with friends and family at coffee shops and stalls.

When Datuk Seri Najib Razak flew into this once bustling coastal fishing town in a helicopter from Kundasang some four hours later to launch the Sabah edition of the Jelajah Janji Ditepati programme on Sunday, tens of thousands were already waiting.

Some had travelled from the sub-districts of Matunggong and Banggi as well as neighbouring Kota Marudu, Kota Belud and Pitas to see the premier in person, hear him speak and take advantage of the various services provided by government departments and agencies participating in the programme.

Loud applause rang out at the Kudat Sports Centre each time the prime minister pledged to carry out a project or an upgrade for Kudat.

Most important of all that day was Najib's assurance that the development agenda for Sabah would be sustained.

"The prime minister said the government will build a mosque for the village. We are very thankful for this," said Kampung Ayer Kudat village head Zakaria Abas.

Zakaria, a fourth-generation village leader, and some 900 villagers have been dreaming of a bigger and comfortable place of worship as the present mosque could only accommodate 500.

Sabahans, as Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman said, were grateful for having Najib as prime minister.

They recognised the leader's exemplary leadership, commitment and sincerity in addressing issues faced by the people, and appreciate his ability and readiness to listen to the grouses and wants of the people.

At the function, many among those present heard for the first time that the Barisan Nasional government had allocated almost RM3 billion under the 2013 Budget for the state's development, quashing claims by former Sabah Umno politician Datuk Seri Lajim Ukin that Sabah had been neglected despite the state's loyalty to the Federal Government.

"While the local parties are trying to show that they are fighting for the rights of Sabah, the big plan for Sabah for 2013, with a huge allocation, was actually complementing the struggle and showing that our prime minister really cares for the welfare of the people of Sabah," political analyst Salman Nurillah was quoted as saying by Bernama.

The Beaufort member of parliament and former deputy housing and local government minister had joined the opposition chorus to claim that Sabahans had been shortchanged.

His allegations, much to the displeasure of BN backbenchers from Sabah, were made when debating the 2013 Supply Bill at the Dewan Rakyat on Oct 8. Such attacks on the government are not uncommon these days. More are expected as the general election draws closer.

Najib's visit to Kudat and two other districts, Penampang and Kundasang, is poised to further strengthen BN in the state amid the opposition foray and recent departure of BN MPs.

The opposition's continuous attacks on Musa despite the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission having cleared him of abusing political donations as alleged by a website, are all to be expected and have left the state BN and Umno leader unfazed. The big turnout for the prime minister in the three districts sent a strong signal to the opposition, especially the local parties, of popular trust and confidence in BN.

The opposition pact, Pakatan Rakyat, with the help of former BN leaders like Lajim, has set its sights on winning big in the coming electoral outing, where 25 parliamentary seats and 60 state seats will be up for grabs. But the opposition appears unable at this point to prevent multi-cornered fights in most areas, which means the BN will have the edge.

Pakatan Rakyat's State Reform Party (Star) and Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) are still locked over competing claims on seats to contest.

Sabah has been a BN stronghold and is unlikely to fall to the opposition despite relentless attacks on the Sabah BN leadership and Federal Government. The worst case scenario is the ruling coalition losing its grip on a few seats. In the 2008 general election, Sabah BN almost made a clean sweep. The only seats that fell to the opposition -- DAP -- were the Kota Kinabalu parliamentary seat and Sri Tanjung state seat in Tawau. The results speak loudly of the extent of support for BN.

Support has remained strong all these years. Efforts to discredit federal and state leaders in bringing about development for Sabah and Sabahans are unlikely to shake BN's position.

Today, the people of Sabah can look forward to projects to boost electricity supply (RM400 million), clean water supply (RM150 million), construction of rural roads (RM31.3 million), public housing in Putatan and Sandakan (RM30 million), agriculture via the Kota Belud-Pitas Agropolitan (RM66 million), education in the Tambunan Community College and Teachers Training Institute, as well as the Tuaran campus (RM32 million), and health facilities, including the upgrade of Kudat Hospital.

Another RM3.06 million has been allocated for the construction of shophouses in Karakit, Pulau Banggi, and RM3.5 million for public housing in Jalan Apa, Kudat.

The government will be distributing 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) to 408,927 households in Sabah, including 20,399 in Kudat -- not including the singles group aged 21 years and above earning less than RM2,000 a month.

The projects are testament to the BN government's ability to deliver its promises.

Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his supporters can continue to croon that BN has lost Sabah, but the odds continue to remain heavily in favour of the ruling coalition.

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