

Special manifesto, fresh faces boost Kelantan BN's GE13 chances, says Tok Pa
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By Amin Iskandar and Md Izwan

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 — Barisan Nasional (BN) is confident of winning Kelantan in Election 2013 by banking on fresh faces and an additional state manifesto to fight PAS which has ruled the state since 1990, says state coalition chief Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed.

Mustapa told The Malaysian Insider the coalition will eliminate internal sabotage to present a slate of capable candidates, an issue which has undermined past campaigns.

"Sabotage politics is everywhere, it is a problem everywhere as many want to be nominated," said the soft-spoken Jeli MP popularly known as Tok Pa.

"We'll try to overcome this. It'll be wrong for me to say that such things do not happen. We need to minimise it, and discipline (our members)," said the minister in his Ministry of International Trade and Industry office here this past week.

Mustapa also believed that transformational programmes introduced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will boost BN's chances of winning the state which has long been under the Islamist party's rule. Najib is due to visit the east coast state today. "They have made a lot of mistakes, unfulfilled promises in Kelantan ... like the land issues. Compared to 1990 and 1995, they have much more issues stacked against them this time," Mustapa told The Malaysian Insider in an exclusive interview.

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He said BN had decided to put out a special manifesto for Kelantan, in addition to the national manifesto to be unveiled after Parliament is dissolved.

The Malaysian Insider reported this week that Parliament and all state assemblies except Sarawak are likely to be dissolved on March 25 with a general election to be held by mid-April. The last general election was in March 2008.

Expressing confidence at performing better in Election 2013, Mustapa said that PAS's credibility was being questioned by voters in Kelantan for its flip-flop in the use of the "Allah" term by non-Muslims.

The top PAS policy-making syura council had decided in January that non-Muslims cannot use the Arabic word "Allah" in translations of their religious texts, but were free to use it orally after PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said that non-Muslim communities should not abuse the word to spread confusion among Muslims.

The east coast Malay heartland state, known to many as the "Corridor to Mecca" for its historical Islamic culture, is 95 per cent Malay-Muslim who are mainly conservatives.

BN has long sought to regain Kelantan, with the ruling federal coalition promising its return from the popular PAS government in every general election since 1995.

The state is synonymous with PAS, with the Islamist party ruling the state through two lengthy periods: from 1959 to 1977, and the current rule since 1990.

Since 2008, BN has won only seven state seats out of 45 in Kelantan, and two out of 14 parliamentary seats. Mustapa's Jeli parliamentary constituency is one of them.

In his pledge for Election 2013, Najib had announced seven major projects for Kelantan, including a highway from Kuala Krai to Kota Baru, a new stadium, construction of the biggest mosque in the state, and a people's housing project starting with 3,000 houses.

He also announced the Rapid Kota Baru public transport system, an urban branch campus of Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) that can accommodate 5,000 students, and a project to resolve water supply problems in Kelantan.

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