

Najib appointed Selangor BN election chief
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will lead Barisan Nasional's (BN) polls blitzkrieg in Selangor as its newly-appointed election director, state leaders decided yesterday, in a move that shows the pact's determination to recapture the country's richest and most industrialised state.

Utusan Malaysia Online quoted Selangor BN coordinator Datuk Seri Mohd Zin Mohamed as confirming that the decision was made during a state BN meeting last night, where leaders strategised on the best formula to ensure Pakatan Rakyat (PR) is toppled in Selangor after Election 2013.

"The Prime Minister, who is also BN's state chairman will lead the election machinery in Selangor and this shows his continuous efforts for the party, showing his confidence and his 'hands on' approach in Selangor," he was quoted as saying.

The Sepang MP also revealed that he would be helping Najib (picture) as his deputy elections director in terms of planning and mobilising the state's election machinery.

BN lost the country's wealthiest state and three others — Perak, Kedah and Penang — in a historic upset in Election 2008, when the federal opposition also captured 82 federal seats to deny the ruling coalition its customary two-third parliamentary majority.

BN later took back Perak in an electoral putsch in February 2009 and has been working hard to unseat PR in Selangor.

In recent months, Najib, who is faced with the tough task of ensuring BN takes a comfortable majority in Election 2013, has been traversing the length and breadth of the country, spreading his pledges of reform and transformation as he urged Malaysians against changing the government.

But observers believe the next electoral race may be neck-and-neck between BN and the fledgling Pakatan Rakyat (PR) pact, which has grown significantly in strength and numbers since its surprise victories in the last federal polls.

Much focus will be placed on Selangor, said to be the country's engine of economic growth, where talk is that PR's administration under first-term Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim may not have performed well enough to sustain its 2008 support.

PR currently has tenuous control over the country's richest state and holds 36 seats in the 56-seat state assembly and 17 out of 22 parliamentary seats.

A swing of seven state seats towards BN in the next general election, which must be held by June, will allow the federal ruling pact to recapture Selangor with a simple majority.

The 13th general election is expected by the second week of April, a month after Najib ends his "Janji Ditepati" (Promises Fulfilled) national tour and his BN completes its candidates list and manifestos, sources have said.

The Malaysian Insider understands the prime minister's last stop of the tour is in his Pekan parliamentary constituency on March 16, after which he is expected to meet the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and seek a dissolution of Parliament.

"The Election Commission (EC) normally sets polling day about three weeks after Parliament is dissolved, so we expect the earliest is mid-April," a BN source told The Malaysian Insider.

There had been speculation that Parliament would be dissolved this week and a general election will be held by the end of March, more than five years after the last general election on March 8, 2008.

The EC will set the polling date with a minimum 10-day campaign period and is expected to do so after Parliament and all state assemblies except Sarawak are dissolved. Sarawak had its state elections in 2011.

The Malaysian Insider previously reported that the BN manifesto will be ready by the end of this month while activists from the component parties have already started their ground work.

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