

PM asks pensioners to help BN close vote gap in Pakatan seats
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PUTRAJAYA, April 8 – Datuk Seri Najib Razak greeted over 3,000 retired civil servants today, as he asked the group to pool their strength in order to keep Barisan Nasional (BN) in Putrajaya.

The prime minister believes that the pensioners' votes are essential to counter a number of former high-ranking government officials who have joined Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in the past few months.

"Let it be heard outside this hall ... let it be heard across the country, that only the current ruling government is able to promise major transformation for our country," Najib said during a meet-and-greet session in the administrative capital here.

"I need everyone to support me. Can you support me?" he asked, replied by a thunderous "Boleh (Can)" from the crowd in Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

The crowd was predominantly Malay and was very receptive of the prime minister, cheering and interjecting every time Najib trumpeted his administration's achievements and mocked the opposition.

Najib in turn, expressed his appreciation for the boisterous crowd by claiming that he has never forgotten the group whenever he announced any wage revision or cash handouts.

"If it were up to me, we would like to give more in the future," he said, referring to an increase in pension pay, while reminding the crowd of Election 2013 which will be held soon.

Earlier, the president of Pensioners Umno Club, Tan Sri Aseh Che Mat, mentioned that there are over 700,000 retired civil servants all over the country, and if counted together with their spouses, can contribute to around 1.5 million potential Umno supporters.

Aseh, who is also the president of Perbadanan Putrajaya – the capital's municipal council – compared the thousands of pensioners to the powerful Jewish lobby in the United States, and asked them to make a difference at seats where BN lost with a narrow margin in Election 2008.

Najib believed that the pensioners hold the votes that will determine the victor of the polls, hailing them as the "wiser, more experienced" group compared to other Malaysians.

"It doesn't matter if there are two or three people who strayed and joined the opposition. We have the numbers," said Najib, calling civil servants who joined PR as those who have lost their pride and dignity.

Recently, four high-ranking defence officers joined PR and have been making rounds during their rallies: Lieutenant General (R) Datuk Abdul Ghafir Abdul Hamid, Brigadier-General (R) Datuk Abdul Hadi Abdul Khatab, First Lieutenant (R) Imran Abd Hamid, and Brigadier-General (R) Datuk Najmi Ahmad.

General (R) Tan Sri Md Hashim Hussein also has been named as PKR's candidate for the Johor Bahru seat.

Former religious department director Datuk Mohd Nahwari Hashim joined PAS during its general assembly in November last year, including 760 ex-army led by Lieutenant Colonel (R) Mohd Nazari Mokhtar.

Other former public servants who have joined PAS before this include former diplomatic officer and ex-Deputy Head of Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs, Datuk Ismail Hamzah and former Senior Director of Farmer's Organisation Authority (LPP), Abd Rahman Taib.

Another of the three was Yusuf Hassan, former Human Resource Director for Jakim and Deputy Secretary for Penang.

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