

Najib: Opposition offering fantasy list of gimmicks and giveaways
Malaysian Insider
April 15, 2013

KUALA LUMPUR, April 15 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak has said he is cautiously optimistic his Barisan Nasional (BN) would be returned to power on May 5, while accusing the opposition of gimmickry and plagiarism.

The BN chairman told Singapore's Straits Times newspaper in remarks published today that he was "cautiously optimistic of a good result in the general election and our ability to form a strong and stable government."

In an e-mailed response to questions, Najib told the Singapore daily: "Malaysia needs a government with experience and a track record that shows it can deliver on its pledges and handle unexpected challenges."

In the 2008 election, the BN lost its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament, and lost five states to the opposition pact that would eventually form Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

The poor results led to Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's ouster and Najib's ascension as PM in 2009.

In his email response to the Singapore newspaper, Najib (picture) also accused PR of copying his BN's manifesto.

"The opposition manifesto borrows heavily from pre-existing government policies. So any plagiarism is theirs.

"Ours is a costed, targeted set of tangible policies," he said. "The opposition's is a fantasy wish list of gimmicks and giveaways that the country can't afford."

The newspaper noted that it was not only the fate of BN that rests on Najib's shoulders — a win with a smaller majority would put the prime minister himself at risk of being replaced as chief of his own Umno party.

Pundits have predicted a BN win although they appear divided on the size of the winning margin.

While the Straits Times pointed out that Malaysia's growth numbers are rosy it also cited critics as lamenting that the government's economic plan relies heavily on pump-priming projects which benefit big businesses and mean little to the general populace.

Najib said however that creating a business-friendly environment is just as critical for small and medium-sized business owners who employ many Malaysians.

Moreover, ploughing funds into building better roads, providing more accessible health care and more affordable housing, implementing poverty reduction programmes and improving public transport benefit ordinary Malaysians, he said.

Najib conceded that more could be done about structural reforms in fighting graft and crime and raising the quality of education, as well as subsidy cuts.

"As the old saying goes, politics is the art of the possible. If you're not willing to

compromise, you won't get very far," he said.

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