

Najib: Voters will reject party renegades
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KUALA KANGSAR, April 26 — Those who abandon their parties will end up getting rejected by the people, Datuk Seri Najib Razak told voters today in a move to inspire his team in Kuala Kangsar in the aftermath of Datuk Kamilia Ibrahim's shock resignation.

Going on the stump at a 1 Malaysia gathering, the Umno president and Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman pointed out that like the opposition, independent candidates would not be able to form a strong government.

"This is a question of principles. A question of reality. A question of pride. A question about our futures.

"Do not be too taken in by their promises. History has shown us that a party is greater than any individual," he told the crowd of over 1,000 people at the Arena Square here.

The caretaker prime minister's lightning appearance appears to be aimed at giving a boost to Umno and BN's almost lethargic campaign in Kuala Kangsar.

BN's election machinery received a rude shock last Saturday when party strongman and Wanita Umno deputy chief Kamilia announced her resignation from the party to contest as an independent in Kuala Kangsar.

She was among 61 Umno members who went rogue for the polls, forsaking their party membership to join the race as independents in what is seen as the stiffest contest for federal power yet in the history of Malaysian elections.

The Kuala Kangsar federal seat was held for six terms by former minister Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz before this but in the 2008 polls, the Umno veteran survived the political tsunami in her stronghold by a mere 1,458 votes.

She was replaced in the coming contest by Umno's Datuk Mohammad Khai'ril Anuar Wan Ahmad, the incumbent in the Bukit Chandan state seat under Kuala Kangsar.

Mohammad Khair'il will face both Kamilia and PAS's Drs Khalil Idham Lim Abdullah, a known Chinese-Muslim who was formerly the assemblyman for Titi Serong.

The opposition has touted Najib's visit today as a sign of fraying nerves in their enemy's camp, citing reports from Umno circles that Kamilia could garner at least 2,800 votes this May 5.

But Najib, who immediately announced the sacking of Umno's rebel leaders on Saturday, insisted today that their betrayal would not affect support for the party.

He cited the example of Umno founder Datuk Onn Jaafar who quit the party in the early 1950s to form another political platform called the National Party.

"But in the end, the people rejected (him). They rejected the leader who founded Umno.

"This goes to show that even if the individual is gone but the party remains, support stays with the party," he said.

The issue of internal sabotage has been a key concern to BN in its bid to stay in control of Putrajaya, fearing a repeat of 2008 when the ruling pact saw its parliamentary numbers dwindle significantly.

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