

**Najib Becoming More Popular Among Malaysians After GE13, Says Salleh
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KOTA KINABALU, Aug 14 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who completed 100 days on Tuesday as prime minister after the 13th General Election (GE13), is becoming more popular and continues to be the people's number one choice in the face of a challenging political battle, according to notable Sabah politician Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak.

He said the Umno president's popularity continued to rise after playing a pivotal role in securing an increased number of (parliamentary) seats for the party, thereby maintaining Umno as the dominant party and the people's choice party.

"No doubt that Najib is facing a political battle against parties that practise 'extreme' politics in terms of their approach.

"However, he (Najib) has managed to balance the principles of Umno's struggle and justice for all by creating economic opportunities and jobs for people from all walks of life," he told Bernama, here, today.

Salleh, who is Sabah Umno Liaison Committee deputy chairman, was commenting on Najib's political challenges faced during his 100 days' administration after being sworn in as prime minister following Barisan Nasional's (BN) victory in the last general election held in May.

Salleh, who is also the State Legislative Assembly Speaker, said Najib aptly countered the opponents' 'politics of perception' by delivering the goods or "what have been promised or said to the people".

"People are fed up with this incessant political propaganda. Najib is focused and continues to perform the best for the people and not be bothered by the opposition's political manoeuvring," he said.

In this respect, the former chief minister reminded Umno members not to be easily hoodwinked by the opposition's political games, as it tried to take advantage or profit from the chaotic situation of others or to fish in murky waters.

Salleh said the political transformation agenda brought about by Najib as the Umno president had resulted in 30 per cent increase of votes in favour of Umno in the recent general election.

"This was evidenced by the increase in the number of parliamentary seats won by the party from 79 in the 12th General Election in 2008 to 88 seats in the GE13.

"Compared to the opposition's 89 seats, Umno as a single party alone could match the combined number of seats garnered by the three opposition parties (DAP, PKR and PAS)," he said.

Salleh stressed that BN's achievements in 2008 and 2013 could not be grasped or adjudged mathematically as the political scenario and leadership then was different.

"Many political transformations have been brought about under Najib's leadership, especially in Umno, and that's why in the last general election, Umno clearly remained the party of choice for the majority of people.

"It is very clear that Umno has proven its ability in the country's political sphere by recapturing Kedah (from the opposition) and Perak (which was won by the opposition in 2008) with increased votes," he said.

Unfortunately, Salleh said the other BN component parties had seen a decline in support, and "this is being pursued by the prime minister with the ultimate goal of uniting the people of this country, particularly in terms of relationships that seem to be a little bit fragile, so much so it has resulted in racial polarisation".

Taking into account these developments, he said the visionary prime minister had already taken proactive steps by proposing the establishment of a National Unity Consultative Council on June 26, this year in an effort to improve race relations and strengthen national unity.

"We (in Umno) should not be caught up in the opposition's politics," he said, adding that Najib and his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had been going to the ground to serve the grassroots.

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