

Transformation, Rejuvenation Of Umno Going Smoothly, Says Najib
Bernama
May 9, 2014

PUTRAJAYA, May 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the process of rejuvenating Umno is progressing smoothly and starting to show positive results.

He said several changes and innovations which had been implemented showed better reception by party members, although some members of the party are still unprepared to change mentally and culturally.

Among them, direct election which was implemented for the first time by the party in the party election last year involving the participation of 160,000 members at the grassroots who were qualified to elect the party leaderships at all levels, compared to only 2,600 previously.

"I admit (transformation) is not all encompassing yet, but I regard this as a journey. This could be the first phase (party election). After this, we must look at what is the best method and how to change the members and leaders' mindset, attitude and values in the context of the grassroots.

"It is not possible for the rejuvenation process of the party to take place in a term or less than one (election) term. There are replacements of old leaders with younger ones in a term and this we will continue and we have to identify new talents," he said.

The changes which were carried out following the amendments to the party constitution in 2009, among others, were aimed at curbing money politics; making the party more open, inclusive and more democratic.

Najib said this in the Ruang Bicara Khas programme with the Prime Minister broadcast by Bernama TV which was aired via Astro 502 channel tonight.

The Prime Minister was interviewed for an hour by Bernama Editor-in-Chief Datuk Zulkefli Salleh, Bernama TV Chief Executive Officer Datuk Ibrahim Yahaya and assistant editor Jamaluddin Muhammad in conjunction with Umno's 68th anniversary at the Prime Minister's Department.

He said the process of rejuvenation of Umno must be implemented in a systematic manner so that it will be seen as a party which recognises new leaders, intellectuals, professionals other than having the younger generation or genY.

On the opinion of certain quarters that Umno allegedly failed to make the rejuvenation of the party into a culture because the number of new faces in the leadership lineup was negligible, Najib said actually there were about 35 percent leadership changes in terms of divisional leadership.

Najib said leadership movements cannot be done drastically but must be made based on continuity and renewal.

"These two elements must be done simultaneously. Meaning, some leaders must be retained because their services are still needed. We have also pushed new leaders centre-stage, we boost their positions in the government, in the party where their contributions will become broader," Najib clarified.

However, Najib said, Umno is a democratic party and can only visualise its aspiration on the matter but the final say is in the hands of the party members during the party elections.

"They need not necessarily retain all existing leaders, and maybe they reject all. So, if old leaders can still serve and contribute and receive the support of the members, they will remain as leaders," he said.

Touching on efforts to recruit cadres, namely, to form a young Umno generation to become leaders and genuine party fighters, Najib said space must be given to new leaders, specifically from among professionals to be absorbed in the party leadership lineup to reflect the composition of society comprehensively without isolating the grassroots leaders.

In the meantime, asked on his feelings when Umno is often labelled as an 'old party' and 'behind time', specifically by the young group, despite numerous plans which were carried out to take the nation to a higher level, Najib calmly regards the opinion as reflecting openness and maturity of the community in airing views compared to previously.

"From one angle, the matter can be said to be a healthy development. From another angle, we as leaders must exercise a lot of patience. Diversity in opinion

is something which can be said to be the norm in an increasingly open society, more mature and more educated," he said.

What is important is that the majority is still with Umno, including the young group, which was proven based on the increased seats won by the party at the 13th general election, said Najib.

Responding to a question on the strengthening of Barisan Nasional (BN), Najib said BN must find a formula to emerge as a party in the true sense of the word and not each moving as different components.

"We must share a platform whereby together we can be seen as the true BN. Not MCA, MIC and Umno separately. This is a new political model and we must think forward. We must also think about the lot of our colleagues in BN so that we can add to the strength in a comprehensive manner.

Touching on the drought in the support of the Chinese towards the BN component party MCA, including in the by-election for the Kajang State seat recently, Najib said the party should not be disappointed, on the other hand it should continue efforts to convince the community on the commitment of the party in representing their interests.

"They (MCA) must increase their engagements with the Chinese community. Explain to them and listen to their grouses why they did not support the government and try to give answers to the actual situation so that the community is not confused by the instigations and claims of the opposition parties," he said.

The Prime Minister is also of the opinion the entry of MCA representatives in the Cabinet is necessary to ensure the government can get the appropriate input from the Chinese community other than to enable the community to be represented in the formulations of national policies and decisions.

However, Najib said, the BN component parties must continue to implement the process of party revivals which is regarded as still not completed, adding they had a limited time before the next general election.

Earlier, when asked to comment on Umno's anniversary tomorrow, Najib said touching 68 does not mean Umno is becoming weaker or unenergetic, on the other hand, Umno proved it is still an empowered and strong party with an

increase in the number of seats won in the last general election.

However, Najib said, as a party, Umno must undergo a transformation and face challenges to ensure the party will remain relevant.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2014 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v7/newsindex.php?id=1037295>