

## **UMNO Is Not 'Village People' Party, Can Also Flourish In Urban Areas - PM Najib**

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JOHOR BAHRU, Aug 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today said UMNO is not a political party merely for village people or rural folks as it could also flourish in urban areas.

The UMNO president said the party's success in Johor Bahru, for example, proved that the largest Malay political party continued to receive the people's support even though the city had undergone a rapid urbanisation process.

"I'm very impressed with the success of Johor Bahru UMNO because in the political history of our country, if there is an urbanisation phenomenon, demographic change and rapid development in any city, sooner or later, the (administration of the) city will be transferred from UMNO or Barisan Nasional (BN) to the opposition.

"There is no state capital that has remained as UMNO/BN constituency, but congratulations to Johor Bahru UMNO for being able to balance the urbanisation process and retain UMNO/BN's power.

"Based on this fact, if anyone should say that UMNO is a village people or rural folks political party, then Johor Bahru UMNO has proved them wrong. The support for UMNO does not necessarily come from rural areas only because the party can indeed flourish in urban areas."

Najib said this when opening the Johor Bahru UMNO Division Delegates Conference here today.

Also present were Johor UMNO Liaison Committee chairman Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin and Johor Bahru UMNO) chief Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad.

The prime minister said Johor Bahru UMNO's success could also become an exemplary model and a template of UMNO's approach in urban areas.

At the same time, Najib said UMNO and BN should also be inclusive by not just focusing on the wellbeing of their members, but also the general public as a whole.

"We have to showcase UMNO and BN as the parties capable of fulfilling the aspirations of city dwellers. We have to take care of the civil society, residents' associations, mosques and those in guarded or gated community.

"We have to find a way to ensure that urban areas will not only provide great opportunities to those with a fat wallet, but also to the B40 group who have to live in big cities," he said.

Meanwhile, the UMNO president said Shahrir's political principles were among the factors that had enabled Johor Bahru to remain as UMNO and BN's stronghold.

He said Shahrir, who is also Johor Bahru Member of Parliament, is strongly committed to serving the people and organising various community programmes, including by successfully turning the Kilang Bateri area into a commercial centre for young entrepreneurs, hence making it a new attraction in the constituency.

"Shahrir may or may not agree with this, but the 'Shahrir Factor' has indeed helped UMNO and BN to retain power in Johor Bahru.

"Use any symbol and he (Shahrir) will win. He can even win by using a fish symbol, or even a key symbol. That is why as the party president, I have high hope that he will not retire from politics," Najib said, adding that he also believed that Shahrir, who is also Felda chairman, would bring more development to Felda settlements.

At the event, Najib, who is also Finance Minister, also approved an allocation of RM2 million to the Johor Bahru City Foundation for the construction of a community hall in Kampung Datuk Onn.

He said he would also look into Shahrir's proposal for 24-hectare land in Kampung Kastam, Larkin to be utilised for the construction of affordable houses.

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