

Tenom MP inspired by legendary warrior spirit

FREE MALAYSIA TODAY

March 13, 2018

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KOTA KINABALU: The Murut people, who form one of the largest ethnic groups in Sabah, were once known as fierce warriors, ready to fight to the end whenever their well-being was threatened.

One of their prominent figures was Ontoros Antenom, who fought against the British colonialists in 1915 following abuse and discrimination against his people, in what became known as the Rundum uprising.

It is this warrior spirit that Tenom MP Raime Unggi says he wants to embody to ensure that Barisan Nasional (BN) rakes in a handsome win in the 14th general election (GE14).

“As a Murut, the warrior blood in me is ever present. Both my parents are Murut as well.

“I will fight for BN and, most importantly, I will fight for the people in Tenom, not only for Muruts but all communities,” said the Tenom Umno deputy chief.

Raime said he had overseen many development projects during his three terms as MP of the interior constituency, some 150km from here.

At 2,409 sq km, Tenom is bigger than the whole of Melaka state but has a population of only 50,000.

Unggi said although he had faced daunting challenges, many of the obstacles were overcome thanks to the “caring” BN government.

“In my last term, there were water and electricity supply problems,” he told FMT.

“The prime minister approved an upgrade of the water system here, while electricity supply in rural areas was also improved. Four villages without the infrastructure have begun enjoying its benefits.”

Raime, who is chairman of the state Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board (CVLB), said the road network in Tenom was also upgraded while the district hospital underwent an expansion.

“Several rural clinics have also been created. Previously, there were only medical assistants at these clinics but now we have at least two doctors.”

The district, known mainly for agriculture and its popular Tenom coffee, will also see initiatives to improve and promote local fruits like bananas, papayas and pomelos, he added.

“Tenom has become a centre for production of these fruits,” he said, adding that programmes to grow rubber and plant padi are also ongoing.

Major flood project appreciated

The icing on the cake for Raime this term was a RM50 million flood mitigation project approved by the federal government.

“The district is flood-prone because the rivers of Pegalan and Padas will swell after prolonged rain. This project will go a long way towards addressing the problem,” he said.

He said the people were grateful as Prime Minister Najib Razak had approved the project although Tenom was one of several areas in the country facing flood issues.

Raime, 48, said he wanted to do more for his hometown as an MP’s job was never over.

He said people had seen BN’s track record in the constituency, unlike the opposition whom he claimed only came out with fancy promises when the polls were near.

Asked if he would defend the seat, Raime said the pertinent matter was to ensure continued progress in Tenom.

“I leave the issue of nomination to the leadership, but hope that all planned development will be carried out for the good of the people.”

In the last general election in May 2013, Raime garnered 9,771 votes, beating Masdin Tumas of PKR who polled 5,885 votes, STAR’s Hasmin Abdullah who managed 2,449 votes, SAPP’s Jaineh Juaya with 1,776 votes and KITA’s Mutang Dawat with 423 votes.

About 66% of the 25,334 voters comprised non-Muslim Bumiputeras, while Muslim Bumiputeras constituted 21% and Chinese 12%.

Tenom has two state constituencies. Kemabong is held by Tenom Umno chief Rubin Balang and Melalap by PBS vice-president Radin Malleh. Both parties are in BN.

The Women, Youth and Puteri wings from the Umno divisions of Tenom, Keningau and Pensiangan last year urged the BN leadership to retain Raime and Rubin, as well as Liawan assemblyman Sairin Karno, as candidates for their respective seats in GE14.

They made the call at a joint delegates meeting attended by Umno vice-president Hishammuddin Hussein.

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