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# Unity call reality check for Umno

General assembly gets sobering reminder of 2008 'political tsunami'

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PRIME MINISTER Datuk Seri Najib Razak's clarion call for unity at the Umno general assembly is a wake-up call for the party over realities facing the upcoming general election.

Political analysts believe party leaders had set the tone to warn delegates of the dangers of sabotage, a sobering reminder of the 2008 election when the Barisan Nasional lost its parliamentary two-thirds majority.

On Saturday, Najib closed the general assembly by posing a "golden question" to the 5,447 delegates at Putra World Trade Centre: "If you are not chosen to contest the polls, would you fully support the candidate chosen by Umno-BN?"

Former Bernama editor-in-chief Datuk Seri Azman Ujang told *The Malay Mail* the BN may risk losing the election if Najib's calls went unheeded.

"Delegates of the Umno general assembly should close ranks to consolidate the party's support among voters," he said.

"Najib's message against attempts at sabotage among Umno's divisional leaders who wouldn't be picked as candidates rang out louder and clearer than any Umno president has given.

"The coming polls would be much harder to win compared to 2008, simply because they are up against a better organised Pakatan Rakyat which has been beefing up its resources and

support among voters over the past four years."

Azman said Umno must learn the lessons of the 2008 "political tsunami".

"The reality is that the Malay heartland, its power base, is split among the party, PAS and Parti Keadilan Rakyat," he said.

"Umno needs other BN parties to deliver the non-Malay votes. It is imperative that they go all-out to improve on their 2008 performance."

Utara Malaysia School of International Studies Dean Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani said the problem of sabotage could not be resolved overnight.

"This problem existed before the 2008 election. We

will know how effective the party has been in tackling it when the candidates are announced," he said.

"Najib needs to announce the candidates early so he can gauge the grassroots' response."

Mohd Azizuddin was also surprised Najib had not laid out Malaysia's plans for the next five years if he became the prime minister for a second term.

"I wished he had enlightened the delegates on policy matters and what he plans to do if BN wins," he said.

"He needed to give a clear picture of what his plans for the country are in comparison with Pakatan Rakyat's *Buku Jingga*



STAND BY ME: Najib meets delegates at PWTC before calling for greater unity in Umno — Pic: FIRDAUS LATIF