

Daim warns of hung parliament

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(The Sun Daily) – UMNO veteran Tun Daim Zainuddin (pix) does not discount the possibility of a hung parliament if many people choose not to vote in the next general election as a result of too much political bickering and mudslinging.

To avoid this situation, he said members of Umno and other Barisan Nasional component parties should stay loyal and vote for the coalition.

Otherwise, it means the opposition may win more parliamentary seats, resulting in neither BN nor the opposition having a governing majority in the parliament.

At present Malaysia has 222 parliamentary constituencies.

Daim, a former finance minister, said a hung parliament will be painful and bad for the country given the lack of political stability.

In an interview with China Press last week, Daim said too much political bickering had made the people sick, and they may decide not to come out to vote, which is “dangerous, and may result in a hung parliament”.

“If the central government drags its feet on problems, and if Pakatan Rakyat state governments do not deliver, the people may become apathetic and stay out (of the elections) and watch from the sidelines. This can result in the crisis of a hung parliament.”

In the 2008 general election, the wind of change in favour of the Opposition resulted in the BN losing its two-thirds majority in the parliament.

BN won a total of 140 seats against Pakatan’s 81.

With the 13th general election expected to be called soon, Daim, who was a long-time Umno treasurer, predicted that PR will keep Penang and Kelantan but lose Kedah, and face fierce battles in Selangor and Perak where both coalitions have a 50-50 chance of winning.

He said given the right choice of candidates, BN can win back Selangor. The key is having fresh faces, he said.

He said BN needs a good leader to lead the charge in Selangor, a fresh face who can match Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim.

“No matter what outsiders say, Khalid gives people the impression he is clean. This is important. It is not easy for BN to win back Selangor, but there is chance,” he said.

He said the non-Malays in Selangor still very much support the PR although not as strong as they did in the last general election.

Daim foresaw problems for the Selangor PR over the sacking of PAS vice-president Datuk Hasan Ali by a party known to stress on fairness and justice.

Hasan has since lost his state exco post.

“Sacking a vice-president without giving him a chance to defend himself will give rise to doubts among the people over the future of the party, especially when it attempts to take power at the federal level.”

He said this was a clear chance for the BN to fight back.

Daim, who in 2007 predicted BN would lose a few states including Selangor and Penang in the 12th general election, believed that in the next general election BN may lose some seats in Sarawak, just like it did in last year’s state election.

As for Sabah, he said it depends on Umno’s performance.

He pointed out that former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad understood the situation in the state and had the chief minister’s post rotated among the three main communities. But since 2003, the post has been held by Umno.

He said that over time, BN component parties may start to ask when would their turn be.

As for Johor, which is an Umno fortress, Daim said PR has very little chance of taking control.

“Chinese voters do not like party-hopping candidates but opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim picked Datuk Chua Jui Meng, who crossed over from MCA to Parti Keadilan Rakyat, as the party’s Johor state chief.”

On the Lynas rare earth plant issue, Daim believed it would not affect BN’s chances in Pahang but said the government has to explain the project clearly to the people, and leave no room for doubt.

“It is okay if the project is safe. But the government needs to explain to the people, to ensure that they understand what you are doing. There is bound to be opposition to any project, the role of the government is to explain, this is the gold rule.”

Prior to the next general election, he said the BN government should give priority to tackling economic issues.

The people want to see economic growth, not corruption and wastage of resources, he said.

He said only a clean government that also took care of the poor and the economy could win the trust of the people.

“The people want to see the government’s economic policy for the next few years, to ensure that there is lasting peace with continued economic growth and stability.

“They also want the government to control inflation, take measures to combat corruption and wastage, ensure their security and safety as well as emphasise on the education of their children.”