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Kit Siang pleads for members to unite

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang said today he could "feel it in my bones for the first time" that the DAP could deny Barisan Nasional a two-thirds majority in the next general elections.

Saying that this objective was the DAP's "eve-of-millennium challenge", he made a plea for members to unite and end its worst crisis since its formation, in order to realise this goal.

Kit Siang, who is battling to close a wide rift in the party, said the outcome of the party's 12th National Congress today was the key to DAP's survival.

"It's all in the hands of this congress. What we have to decide today is whether DAP lives or dies," he said to the 630 delegates.

Top on the agenda were the election of 20 central executive committee members, the motion to amend the party's constitution and consideration of three former leaders' disciplinary appeal. The three are expelled national publicity secretary Wee Choo Keong, suspended national vice-chairman Liew Ah Kim and suspended national treasurer Fung Ket Wing.

"The congress must send out a clear message to friends and foes alike (that this is) the end of the DAP's worst crisis in 32 years," he said.

He said it was sad that when many people outside the party had rallied behind deputy secretary-general and his son, Lim Guan Eng, "we do not have such unity of purpose and even comradeship inside the party."

Kit Siang again pledged to step down if this was the wish of the delegates.

"I have been secretary-general for 29 years ... At the end of last year, I said I would step down in five years. But some cannot wait for the five years.

"I leave it to all of you to decide. If you decide 32 (years) is enough, I accept the verdict of the delegates and will retire from politics from today."

Kit Siang was, however, voted back into the CEC today.

On the economy, he called for an all-party parliamentary committee to monitor the progress of the National Economic Recovery Plan.

He also said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad should spell out the "shocking measures" needed to overcome the economic problems and allow a debate on them.

"This is why the DAP calls for an emergency meeting of Parliament, to fully prepare the country for the tough times in the coming months and years."

He predicted that the general elections would be held this year, and "would not be surprised if Parliament is dissolved immediately after the Commonwealth Games" and polling held in mid-October.

Meanwhile, chairman Dr Chen Man Hin called for full support for Kit Siang, national deputy chairman Karpal Singh and "other tried and trusted leaders".

Rebutting the allegations made by disgruntled party leaders, he said the publicity had harmed the party's image and reputation greatly.

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