

Daim: BN only safe in three states in GE13
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Former finance minister and long-time Umno treasurer Daim Zainuddin - who had predicted the fall of BN in Penang, Selangor and Kedah in the 2008 general election - has looked into his crystal ball again.

The view isn't exactly rosy for the federal ruling coalition in the next polls, according to an exclusive interview with Daim published today by Chinese daily Nanyang Siang Pau.

Daim said he expects an easy victory for BN only in Johor, Malacca and Pahang.

The key to recapturing Kedah and Selangor from Pakatan Rakyat, he said, would be to find suitable leadership line-ups in those states.

To keep Terengganu and Sabah, a united Umno will be essential, but retaining Perak will be an uphill battle for BN, Daim believes.

In Negri Sembilan, one of Pakatan's frontline states where BN only rules with a six-seat majority, Daim said the state BN must resolve some specific problems.

Although he did not elaborate on the issues, it is known that a suitable candidate must be found to fill the menteri besar's post because the incumbent, Mohamad Hasan, is likely to move to a federal government post.

As for Kelantan and Penang, Daim said BN would be fighting losing battles in the two Pakatan strongholds.

Daim described Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and his team as "generals without soldiers".

"The prime minister and other key leaders have done enough. Their current situation is that of 'generals without soldiers'. Where are BN's soldiers? The leaders at division and branch levels must be more proactive in engaging with the people."

What Najib currently needs, Daim observed, is a team that is on the same page with him.

"In parliamentary elections, depending on a single person, the prime minister alone, will not be enough for success. BN needs a team. The prime minister has done enough, but the problem is that the people cannot see his team. He needs to tell the people where his team is."

The Umno veteran advised Najib to be more determined in cutting out the deadwood.

A close colleague of former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Daim was Umno treasurer from 1984-2001.

He served as finance minister from 1984-1991 and as minister with special functions in the Prime Minister's Department in 1998, before being re-appointed as finance minister in 1999. He retired in 2001.

A year before the 12th general election, Daim had warned that BN would lose Penang, Selangor and Kedah.

His prophecy came true when BN was hit by a 'political tsunami' on March 8, 2008, losing not just five states then but also its two-thirds majority in Parliament.

'PM shouldn't be finance minister'

Sharing his experiences as finance minister, Daim said a non-Malay leader could hold the post as long as he or she had financial and economic knowledge, as well as an understanding of domestic politics.

NONEThe convention set by Mahathir (right) for the prime minister to hold the finance minister's post as well, was inappropriate, he reiterated, as the workload of a prime minister - who is also the head of Umno and BN - is tremendous.

"I know that the post needs full commitment," Daim said, suggesting that giving the post to another individual would enhance checks and balances in the administration.

He urged Najib to emulate British practice in creating a world class cabinet, and eliminating the perception that the finance portfolio is intended to help the holder to accumulate political resources.

"British prime ministers have never held the post of finance minister... why do we need a second finance minister? Actually we only need one full-time finance minister because it is a post with huge responsibilities."

Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim has already pledged that, should Pakatan come to power at federal level, the posts of prime minister and finance minister would not be held by the same individual.

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