

MCA warns Sabah 'fixed deposit' at real risk
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Sabah MCA has joined the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to echo recurrent warnings that the BN should no longer take Sabah for granted as their electoral 'fixed deposit' for the ruling coalition.

"The BN may not only lose Sabah but Sarawak as well by the time the next general election comes around in 2013," warned Penampang MCA division chairperson senator Paul Kong Sing Chu. "If the general election is held early next year, as the talk goes, to coincide with state elections in Sarawak, the loss may come even quicker."

Kong was speaking on the sidelines during the MCA division's annual general meeting at Beverly Hills in Bundusan, on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu last night.

Kong said that all the party's analyses so far confirm independent assessments that the ruling coalition is losing its grip on the two Borneo states.

NONEIf the current downhill trend continues, he added, then Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's (right) contention that Pakatan Rakyat would form the next federal government in Putrajaya will come true. "Lim only wants 25 parliamentary seats from Sabah and Sarawak. This is not a tall order for the opposition alliance, as seen from Sibu which BN lost on May 16 after 28 years."

Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan constitute a total of 57 parliamentary seats; the numbers are instrumental in helping the ruling coalition hold on to power. Only three of these seats, two in Sarawak and one in Sabah, belong to the opposition.

The recurrent grouse is that, despite keeping the ruling coalition in power, both the states have nothing so far to show. There have been no end of promises and assurances from Putrajaya, it has been noted, and a flurry of visits by federal leaders at regular intervals to check on the 'fixed deposit' situation in Sabah and Sarawak, "without going down to the grassroots and meeting the people".

The Kepayan MCA is a case in point, complains Kong.

Leaders ignore constituencies

"So far, we have been ignored," said Kong. "If the present situation persists, I can honestly tell you that our future in Sabah is very bleak indeed."

One of the Kong's main grouses is that the leadership in Kuala Lumpur, both at MCA and the BN level, have ignored all of the Kepayan division's requests and recommendations. This includes requests for some modest resources to run the party's activities in the state constituency.

As a result, the division is not moving at all on the ground, and even the small-scale activities carried out before have come to a halt.

Kong says the party is facing an uphill task on the ground in Sabah, as the opposition parties continue to make steady inroads "without having to make good on any promises". He did not mention any party, but PKR in particular has been kicking up a storm in his

constituency, where the Chinese form a significant minority.

"MCA leaders in Sabah are very afraid these days to turun padang (go to the ground) because they would be reminded by the people of promises which have not been kept so far," conceded Kong.

He also took the opportunity to condemn former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad's (left) statement that "gambling is as important to the Chinese as eating pork", saying it's part of the community's culture, and him claiming that it's part of the community's culture.

"This is like saying that all Chinese gamble in the same way that all of them eat pork," fumed Kong. "Studies show that less than five percent of Chinese gamble. It's against our culture just as Islam forbids gambling."

Kong called on Mahathir to apologise unreservedly to the Chinese community "for his calculated insult". He claimed that most of the punters at 4D outlets in Sabah are Muslims from low-income groups and illegal immigrants who cash their winnings through locals if they don't have a MyKad.

'Remove bad apples'

LDP, meanwhile, resumed its attacks on the state BN leadership in the wake of Kong's remarks at the Penampang division's AGM.

"If our advice is not taken seriously by the BN's top leadership, then we can only blame ourselves when the people decide to abandon us in the next general election," stressed LDP Youth leader Chin Shu Ying.

Chin reiterated that the BN leadership in Kuala Lumpur must act to remove a group of "bad apples from the state BN leadership in Sabah".

"We must admit that there is a group of corrupt, arrogant leaders in the Sabah BN," said Chin. "They are causing great damage to the reputation and popularity of the party."

He likened the "bad apples" to cancer cells which, if not removed, will cause the whole body to die.

Sabah Chief Minister Musa Aman (right), in the meantime, is urging BN component parties not to bring their problems and differences to the media, calling for negotiations and discussions to settle problems instead.

"Exposing domestic problems in the media will only invite certain quarters to take advantage of the situation," said Musa last night in Sandakan on the sidelines of an Umno meeting in Batu Sapi along the east coast. "This will cause disunity in the coalition."

Sabah has gone through a change of government every ten years. BN's ten years is already up if the five-year term of the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) from 1994-1999 is discounted. BN seized the reins of power in Sabah one month after the state election of 1994 after engineering massive defections from PBS.

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