

New voters explosion ahead of polls
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 13 — Voter registration for 2010 was three times of 2009, a clear indicator the general public is anticipating a general election.

“The number of newly registered voters for 2010 is 820,156 whereas for 2009, the number of newly registered voters was 276,621 and all this was processed in the same year,” de facto law minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz (picture) said in a written reply to Parliament today.

“There will be a significant increase in registration as the people expect the elections to be soon,” he added.

Meanwhile, equities research firm Nomura said a huge new voters’ increase makes the next general election highly unpredictable. It was also likely to intensify competition, given the narrow margin of victory of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition in 2008 of a mere 384,688 votes.

“Malaysia is heading into uncharted territory, with the increase in the number of voters at levels that could make the election outcome highly unpredictable,” Nomura had said in its report earlier this year.

As of July last year, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) was leading in the voter registration drive, signing up twice the number of voters compared with Barisan Nasional (BN) in the first six months of 2010.

The DAP was also leading in signing up more voters compared with other political parties, registering 32.5 per cent of the new 169,838 voters registered between January and June last year.

Umno followed, registering 32.3 per cent of the new voters, with PAS at 22.7 per cent.

PR was also surprisingly ahead of BN in registering voters in Johor, seen as an Umno stronghold. PR registered almost 60 per cent of the new voters registered by political parties.

But even if PR were to win the popular vote count with the new voters, it does not follow that it would win government.

With the first-past-the-post system that Malaysia practises rather than proportional representation, a party can still win the popular vote but fall short on winning government.

In the 2008 polls, BN obtained 4.1 million votes, or about 51.4 per cent of the total, giving it a 63 per cent share of parliamentary seats.

PR obtained 3.8 million votes — 47.8 per cent of the total — yet gained a disproportionate 37 per cent of the parliamentary seats.

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