

**Daim: BN can reclaim lost states**  
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**By MAZLINDA MAHMOOD AND AKIL YUNUS**

Barisan in a better shape to face general election under Najib's good leadership, says top veteran

WITH the right strategy, Barisan Nasional (BN) stands a good chance of reclaiming Pakatan Rakyat-led states and retaining control of the other states in the next general election, said former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin.

In an interview published in *Mingguan Malaysia*, Daim viewed favourably the management of the economy and the transformation programmes introduced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

He said BN was in a better shape to face the general election.

"I think Pakatan's most tragic mistake in Selangor was the way it handled Datuk Dr Hasan Ali's issue. There was no warning or show-cause letter, and he was immediately red-carded.

"Both Pas and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) could not deny Umno's argument that the decision was influenced by DAP, which is uncomfortable with Dr Hasan."

The long-serving Umno treasurer spoke about his friendship with opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Anwar's PKR was built on notions of "conspiracy and fitnah (slander)".

On his friendship with Anwar, Daim said the former deputy prime minister turned against him after his (Anwar's) exit from the cabinet. He added that Anwar made him one of the scapegoats.

Daim said he believed PKR's window to gain support based on the concept of "conspiracy and fitnah" had closed.

In terms of leadership qualities and character, Daim said Najib had triumphed over Anwar.

"Najib has been tested with the toughest trials and tribulations, and he is now ready to take the country forward.

"The most important issue is whether BN is ready to move forward with him".

He said Najib had been honed with leadership qualities since he was elected to Parliament in 1976.

Daim added that BN should not be distracted by the antics of Anwar. He said the task of outwitting Anwar should be left to the younger leaders so that the top leaders could focus on governing.

He said Anwar's biggest aim was to distract the government, and BN should not play to his tune.

"His acquittal will, in the long run, help Umno and BN attain great results in the 13th general election as it denounces his main excuse to blame the government.

"Anwar has degraded some of the country's major institutions like the judiciary, police and government, which are vital for the creation of a civil society.

"If you subscribe to his logic, it means you are allowed to break traffic rules because police are corrupt, and it is all right to live in a state of anarchy because he says the police and the judiciary are not trustworthy."

As for the dynamics of the general election, Daim said BN must look for a new candidate in Selangor with the right academic qualifications to attract the growing middle class in old university towns like Shah Alam, Bangi, Serdang and campus areas like Gombak, Sunway and Damansara.

"Old politics will not regain Selangor."

He said among the concerns of the urban population in Selangor and Federal Territories were access to quality education, comfortable homes and security.

Daim said Kelantan was not a lost cause, provided there was no in-fighting in the Pas stronghold.

"Kelantan has a natural leader in Tok Pa (Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed).

"He is a gentleman who works 18 hours a day and returns to work the next day early in the morning. These are the qualities of a leader the people look for.

"I have never heard of Pas saying anything bad about him. He is a threat to Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat.

"Infighting was what failed Umno there in the past."

In Terengganu, he said, the state leaders must cast aside their differences.

"I don't think (Pas president) Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang is the best candidate. Umno's candidate is more dynamic.

"Umno must stay united so that the voters will vote for them."

As for Kedah, he said, Pas had failed to bring about significant development. Due to the current power struggle in the Pas-led state, he said there was a good chance for BN to reclaim the state by offering new blood with new leadership style.

Daim admitted that Penang would be an uphill battle for BN despite Najib's growing popularity.

He said a good strategy was that BN must continue to focus on economic development, providing better housing, world-class public transport and world-class universities.

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