

BN will retain Sabah with ease, says academic
TheStarOnline
July 02, 2012
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KOTA KINABALU: Barisan Nasional appears to be in a comfortable position to retain Sabah in the general election as the opposition is in disarray, said an academician.

Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) political science lecturer Dr Arnold Puyok said the ruling coalition should be able to retain its two-thirds majority with ease though it may face stiff challenge in Chinese and non-Muslim bumiputra areas.

He added that Umno, which leads the coalition, will hold on to its seats while helping its partners retain their seats where Muslim bumiputras form an influencing and sizeable number.

"Umno will remain a force in state politics as the opposition has yet to provide any credible or popular alternative leadership for the Muslim bumiputras.

"The Muslim-majority areas will be the Barisan's key seats to help maintain the party's hold on power," he said.

He added that the growing influence of the State Reform Party (Star) has weakened the Barisan's influence in Kadazandusun and Murut areas, saying that the Barisan leaders from these communities were not able to address state issues effectively.

"Inability to provide a clear and new vision to develop the community could spell trouble to the Barisan's Kadazandusun-based parties," he said, adding that the opposition has the upper hand to retain a sizeable number of Chinese-based areas.

Regarding the homegrown LDP, he said it is perceived to be a weak party while Gerakan, which came into prominence in Sabah only through defection, might face rejection by voters.

On PKR, he said it appears to have failed to take the Muslim bumiputra support from Umno, saying there was a lack of credible and popular Muslim leaders.

The Barisan state seats are currently divided among Umno (32), PBS (13), Upko (five), Gerakan (three) and one each from the PBRS and MCA. The other seats are held by SAPP (two) and DAP (one).

The MPs from Sabah are from Umno (13), Upko (four), PBS (three), SAPP (two) and one each from PBRS and DAP.

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