

**Dr M predicts weak BN government after GE13**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today predicted that Barisan Nasional (BN) was “likely” to continue its rule after the next polls with a weak government but said this would be an undesirable outcome as the pact would be preoccupied with its own survival instead of the country’s development.

The country’s former prime minister pointed out that without a strong two-thirds majority in Parliament, a government could easily be toppled from its perch through mass defections.

“So the government is more interested in trying to survive and not ensuring that this country grows and prospers.

“When a leader is preoccupied with survival, then attention to businesses, the commercial industry, would be much less,” he told the Perdana Leadership’s CEO Forum 2012 here.

Dr Mahathir (picture) repeatedly stressed the need for a stronger mandate for BN to ensure Malaysia’s prosperity, saying this was also necessary to help the government implement policies that may make them unpopular but would also help boost the country’s coffers.

“I say a strong government is necessary if we are going to do unpleasant things. We cannot be pleasant all the time.

“A government has to annoy the people. If the government wants to be popular all the time, then it would be doing the wrong thing,” he said.

BN coalition sources have said that several recent surveys showed that BN needed to work harder for a convincing victory, especially with some 2.2 million voters casting ballots for the first time. The next general election is only due after April 2013 when BN’s mandate expires.

It is understood the compilation of surveys revealed that BN could win up to 146 parliamentary seats with at least 80 sure wins, more than the 140 won in Election 2008.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak’s approval rating from the Chinese and Indian communities slipped after the April 28 Bersih 3.0 rally, but the latest survey by pollster Merdeka Center showed the leader’s percentage points have climbed to 69 per cent, largely due to a surge of support from poorer Malaysians.

This has been attributed to the Najib administration’s cash handouts through programmes like the Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (BR1M), which Dr Mahathir today admitted was similar to vote buying.

But apart from his break prediction of BN’s chance to recapture its coveted two-thirds parliamentary majority, Dr Mahathir also took pot shots at Pakatan Rakyat (PR), saying the opposition pact was too fractured to be able to govern well.

He singled out the protracted dispute between PAS and DAP over the implementation of the Islamic penal code, hudud, said to be PR's Achilles' heel, as an example of disunity within PR.

"Firstly... they are a 'pakatan' (pact), not a coalition. And there is a negative connotation to the word 'pakat'... because when you 'pakat' with someone, you usually want to do bad things.

"Also, they are already having problems over hudud laws, which they say provides for the chopping of hands as punishment for theft," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the implementation of hudud law for Muslims in Malaysia would only serve to divide the country, as this would mean a dual legal system.

He said it would not be considered "justice" if two thieves, one a Muslim and one non-Muslim, were caught for the same crime but the former gets his hand chopped off under hudud while the latter gets jailed for two months.

"Islam preaches justice. And if this cannot be justice, then this cannot be Islamic," he said.

Dr Mahathir also warned of greater corruption under a PR-led federal government, predicting that the pact's plans to reduce the tax burden on Malaysians would only promote a culture of corruption in the civil service.

He explained that by reducing taxes imposed on Malaysians, government revenue would deplete and this, in turn, would be translated into lower salaries for civil servants.

"When salaries are low, they (civil servants) will give up some standards and ask for money (through corrupt means). Corruption will become worse when government servants are not paid adequate salaries," he said.

Dr Mahathir also pointed out that PR's proposal to pay 20 per cent in royalties to all oil-producing states would also see the government's revenue take a deep plunge and this would ultimately affect its expenditure on development on other non-oil producing states.

"I wonder if these states are even aware of this," he said.

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