

Like Najib, Kit Siang cautions against Romney tactics of alienation
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 13 — DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang today told Pakatan Rakyat (PR) not to take its eye off the middle ground, warning that the pact could go the way of US presidential candidate Mitt Romney and lose the polls if it alienates Middle Malaysia.

In the recent Umno general assembly, Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak also dangled Romney's defeat in the just-concluded US presidential elections to warn Umno delegates away from employing the party's old-school warlord-style politics during the coming 13th general election.

Lim (picture) said PR must show Malaysia's over 13 million voters, 80 per cent of whom are aged below 45, how it can perform better than Barisan Nasional (BN) in areas deemed as pertinent to the middle ground such as education, the economy, job security, public safety and corruption.

The federal opposition also needs to win at least 70 per cent of the nearly three million newly registered voters, 60 per cent of whom are aged below 30, and some three per cent of the one million swing voters from Election 2008 to secure Putrajaya in the polls, he said.

This should give PR a seven-seat majority in Parliament, the Ipoh Timor MP added, and finally put an end to BN's half-a-century rule of Malaysia.

"But only by reaching out to the middle ground with concrete and credible solutions can PR achieve its goal of reaching Putrajaya," Lim reminded in a statement here.

"If PR repeats the mistake of the BN and of the Republicans by instinctively reaching for our respective 'bases' in terms of voters, then we would be giving away these votes to the BN (rather than the BN winning these votes from us)," he warned.

Lim, who is also DAP adviser and an old hand at Malaysian politics, said that even if PR were to lose the three million new voters by a small majority and lose just one per cent of the one million Election 2008 swing voters, BN would have enough to recapture its traditional two-thirds parliamentary majority.

Under this scenario, he said BN would have won at least 149 seats in the 222-seat lower House.

"As such, we cannot afford to take our eye off the middle ground," he said.

With elections around the corner, focus has centred on middle-ground voters — the young, the urban and more educated class who are seen as the more discerning group of voters who make up the majority of the electorate.

In the recent Umno general assembly, Najib told delegates that much like how the US Republican candidate's over-reliance on its traditional vote bank of the older, white Americans, had lost him the polls, Umno too could lose Putrajaya if it continued to depend of support from the rural, ethnic Malay voters.

The prime minister, who has been working tirelessly on efforts to transform the country's administration and Umno itself, was clearly attempting to nudge his party towards embracing Malaysia's growing middle ground, where voters no longer appreciate race-based politics.

PR is said to have an edge over the middle-ground voters but Lim warned today that taking this for granted could lead to colossal losses in the next polls.

"Any party or leader within PR can easily alienate the middle ground if her or she chooses to pander to any small but vocal group that only represents a small segment of society.

"More than ever, PR needs to convince the middle ground that it can provide better and more credible solutions to the problems which affect all Malaysians and not just a few selective groups," he said.

As examples, Lim said that PR must offer comprehensive solutions to reverse the decline in Malaysia's education standards, citing the country's dismal drop in rankings under the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2011 survey.

He said PR must also show how it plans to transform the economy to provide better and higher-paying jobs for the young and coming generations, many of whom have left the country in seek of better opportunities abroad.

Lim also cited concerns from the public on the state of security in Malaysia, saying that PR must find ways to restore public confidence in the police force, apart from outlining better solutions to reduce crime.

"I am confident that if the DAP together with our colleagues and compatriots in PAS and PKR, as part of a united PR coalition, remain focused on winning the voters in the middle ground, the wave of their support would take us all the way to Putrajaya and usher in a new era for Malaysia and Malaysians," he said.

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