

Dr M says two-thirds win for BN possible
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By Boo Su-Lyn

KUALA LUMPUR, April 8 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad expects Barisan Nasional (BN) to score a bigger parliamentary majority in Election 2013 than in Election 2008, with the “possibility” of the ruling coalition regaining a supermajority.

The influential former prime minister also said in an interview with Malay-language broadsheet Utusan Malaysia published today that BN had a 50-50 chance in retaking Kelantan and Penang, and slightly higher chances at 55-45 in winning back Kedah and Selangor in the 13th general election.

“A year ago, even six months ago, I was less confident. But now, I find that people’s reception to Najib’s visits, including from the Chinese, is far better than in the 2008 general election,” Dr Mahathir was quoted as saying by Utusan, referring to current Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

“That’s why people say that there is a shift of support to BN and with this, I’m confident that BN will score a better victory than in 2008. There’s also the possibility of getting two-thirds,” he added.

The historic Election 2008, dubbed Malaysia’s “political tsunami”, saw BN lose its customary two-thirds parliamentary majority and cede four states — Perak, Penang, Kedah and Selangor — to the loose opposition pact of PKR, PAS and the DAP that later formed Pakatan Rakyat (PR). PAS had retained Kelantan.

Three PR assemblymen in Perak, however, defected in 2009, sparking the collapse of the state government.

Utusan reported Dr Mahathir as saying that the Malays in Perak had supported the DAP at one point, but noted that “things have changed now.”

PR is struggling to win the Malay vote in the silver state, but Perak’s former Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Nizar Jamaluddin said recently that surveys have shown an increase in Malay support from 28 per cent in Election 2008 to 32 per cent for the coming general election.

Dr Mahathir also said that Kedah and Selangor residents have “woken up”, but stressed that he did not want to be “optimistic”.

“For Sabah and Sarawak, I see that we can win, but maybe we can’t get the same victory like in 2008,” said the prominent Umno leader, referring to east Malaysia that has always been considered BN’s “fixed deposit”.

“For Negri Sembilan, I think that our position is safe if they don’t fight among ourselves. Problems arise when they fight among themselves, but I think that this won’t happen,” added the 87-year-old.

Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, however, said last Thursday that saboteurs in BN would appear once the ruling coalition announced its candidates.

Dr Mahathir, who has been campaigning hard for BN in the past few months, stressed that internal sabotage was more harmful now because BN only had hundred-strong majorities.

"So, if there are certain parties that want to leave and drag 100 or 200 followers along, we might face problems. The sabotage issue has happened before, but it is more dangerous now," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that it was important for BN to keep political veterans despite former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin urging Najib recently to axe deadwood from within the current Cabinet.

"I think that the old need to remain. It's not good if we throw them out completely because there needs to be continuity between the old and the new," said Dr Mahathir.

"However, I believe that the election this time is more about the party, and not the candidate. We need to decide which party wins. BN needs to win," he added.

Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister appears to be Najib's campaigner-in-chief as he leads the BN ceramah circuit to spread its power-sharing formula for stability, even as political and economic crises hit Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Election 2013 is expected to be the most keenly-contested polls in recent times as BN gears up to face a formidable opposition pact.

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