

BN says to implement urban reform to tackle plunging support
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 13 — Barisan Nasional (BN) is set to spearhead an “urban transformation” programme in a move to tackle plunging support among city dwellers in the May 5 general election.

The ruling coalition’s veteran backbencher Tan Sri Shahrir Samad (picture) said today the urban reform programme was among the key issues discussed in this afternoon’s meeting between BN lawmakers to prepare for the 13th parliamentary session where it expects to face an onslaught by a much stronger opposition.

“The meeting touched on how we can do better and contribute to the national transformation implemented by the prime minister... and among the proposals were to include urban transformation,” he told a press conference after chairing the meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Shahrir, himself a lawmaker representing the urban federal seat of Johor Baru, admitted that BN’s past urban policies may have been ineffective in tackling problems facing city voters.

“Usually when we say urban transformation programme, we speak of things like public transport and so on. But now the transformation would include improving quality of life,” he said.

A study of data from Election 2013 showed a major swing among the multiracial urban and middle-class electorate away from BN, independent pollster Merdeka Center said recently.

The study came amid repeated attempts by right-wing elements in the coalition’s anchor party Umno to frame the polls as a Chinese-versus-Malay vote.

In their preliminary reading of the voting trend, analysts pointed out that despite the increase in Chinese support for PR, the political tsunami was also propelled by a large number of Malays who form part of the country’s middle- to upper-class electorate.

But BN chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had dismissed the findings and insisted that an internal study showed increased urban Malay support towards his coalition.

He had also attributed BN’s record losses to a “Chinese tsunami”, which he blamed on what he described as DAP’s “racist” politics. Najib further said the opposition party’s communal driven campaign had cost the ruling coalition the seats needed to form a two-thirds parliamentary majority.

BN secured only 133 of the 222 federal seats it contested for or seven fewer than what it garnered in the 12th general election. It also lost the popular vote by two per cent, making the Najib administration a minority government.

Coalition secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Mansor said BN is anticipating an opposition drubbing in Parliament where PR lawmakers are expected to make the election outcome a major issue for debate.

PR has questioned the legitimacy of the new government since it claimed the May 5 polls results had been rigged.

“The opposition alleged there were unfairness in the polls and by the Elections Commission but from the feedback we received from our MPs is that they were the one that caused so many problems that made the election process chaotic,” he said.

Tengku Adnan added that the “problems” included violations of electoral regulations like canvassing for votes on polling day and campaigning near polling stations.

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