

Onus Is On Sarawak Chinese-based Parties To Ensure BN's Victory – Academician

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KUCHING, March 4 (Bernama) -- The internal bickerings of the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) which led to the formation of the United People's Party (UPP) in 2014 was a big blow to SUPP especially after its image was dented in the 13th General Election (GE-13) when five of the seven parliamentary seats contested were won by DAP while another fell to PKR.

In short, of the 31 parliamentary seats in Sarawak, SUPP currently has only one parliamentary seat in Serian, while Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) has 15, Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) five and Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) four; while the opposition parties DAP and PKR hold six seats, after SUPP lost all these seats.

Undoubtedly, the party needs to do something concrete for the GE14 which is soon approaching, to restore its glory as the oldest party in Sarawak, in representing the voice of the Chinese community here, as well as in contributing to a bigger win to the Barisan Nasional (BN).

Apart from countering the DAP, SUPP now has to explore ways to unite with its splinter party, UPP, to bridge the gap in facing the coming challenge, so that should BN lose in the Chinese majority areas this would not be analysed as a 'stab in the back'.

Associate Prof Dr Jeniri Amir from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) said that if there was no understanding between them, the seats with Chinese-majority voters

could possibly create a negative impact on BN, indirectly revealing that the BN has difficulties in winning the hearts of the Chinese, especially in the urban areas.

"It is hoped that the two parties will take heed of all the advice given, find a solution to prevent greater defeat as there must be a 'win-win situation' for both parties and moving forward is the formula to ensure victory," he told Bernama when met recently.

If the status quo is maintained, the six Chinese-majority parliamentary constituencies to be contested are Kuching City, Stampin, Sibul, Lanang, Sarikei and Miri while Serian is a Dayak majority seat.

The move taken by Sarawak Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Wong Soon Koh in leaving SUPP to set up UPP had taken everyone by surprise especially at that time, GE13 was just over and the 11th Sarawak state election was coming up.

However thanks to the wisdom and charisma of the late Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem who managed to settle the disputes, the Chinese community's confidence in SUPP was restored during the last state election in 2016.

In honouring the principle of consensus within the BN, UPP was not accepted into the BN despite being "BN-friendly", but Wong was allowed to contest in Bawang Assan state seat on condition he contested as a 'direct candidate' or a candidate not representing any party.

The formula was seen to have had a positive impact when SUPP under the leadership of Datuk Dr Sim Kui Hian as its president, succeeded in securing seven of the 13 state seats which were contested, while the DAP, which had previously won 12 state seats, was left with seven.

At this point, the focus is on the wisdom and integrity of the new Chief Minister Datuk

Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg in looking for the best solution in continuing the momentum of Chinese support for the BN at the GE.

Jeniri said he believed victory in the Chinese majority seats was crucial as this would give the opportunity for a Chinese representative from Sarawak to be included in the federal cabinet lineup.

Presently he said there was no possibility that the opposition would be able to increase their seats in Sarawak because at the previous GE the opposition was seen to have saturated.

"I also doubt that the opposition, especially the DAP, can penetrate the rural areas because these are BN strongholds and it is unlikely that they can defeat the candidates or parties such as the PBB, PRS and other BN component parties," he said.

"A big BN victory in Sarawak is not only important in fighting for Sarawak's autonomous rights under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63), but also to create an opportunity for a Chinese representative from Sarawak to be in the federal cabinet, as how it was before 2013," he added.

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