

Spotlight all on the CM

Adenan factor continues to hog Barisan Nasional's campaign

KUCHING: All signs are pointing to a status quo at the halfway mark of the 11th Sarawak election as the Adenan factor continues to dominate the campaign.

Having picked up Bukit Kota and Bukit Sari uncontested on nomination day, Barisan Nasional is confident of winning more than 70 seats on May 7.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem said his confidence was based on the response given to Barisan candidates so far.

"From my observation in the past two weeks, the people's trust in Barisan is still strong. I believe that Barisan can win more than 70 of the 82 seats," he said when launching a waterfront project here yesterday.

In the 2011 election, Barisan won 55 of the 71 seats at stake.

According to political analysts, this has truly been an "Adenan election", with the Opposition struggling



to find campaign points against the Chief Minister and suffering from the Immigration bans imposed on their peninsula leaders.

Assoc Prof Jeniri Amir of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak said the Opposition had yet to find a new campaign target.

"Previously, the anti-Barisan campaign was simple. It was *Pek Moh* (former chief minister Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud). Their cry for change focused on getting rid of the chief minister. Straightforward," he said.

DAP's *Ubah* battle cry lacked rele-

vancy this time, he said, as Adenan's public image was harder to attack.

"He is down-to-earth. He goes to the market. He met Watson Nyambek after the Dayak athlete was declared a bankrupt."

"So unlike 2011, even getting 1,000 people to show up at Opposition *ceramah* seems quite difficult," Jeniri said.

On the Barisan side, the component parties are pushing the boundaries with a new leader in place.

"The new guy has not been tested so everyone is trying to push their luck," said UKM's Assoc Prof Faisal S. Hazis.

"This is why there has been a fragmentation within Barisan. It's not just tussles between SUPP and UPP or SPDP and Teras, but PRS president Tan Sri James Masing is getting more vocal. You even have first-time candidates like Milton Foo writing an open letter against Adenan,"

Faisal said.

For now, the analysts said both sides had done little to shift the ground and status quo would likely be maintained.

Based on past polls, Faisal said, about 85% of voters had made up their minds even before nomination.

"The campaign period is basically the final lap, the last push to swing fence-sitters. Sarawak elections have rarely seen huge swing votes. The most is about 10% usually," he said, adding that huge swings only occurred due to sabotage.

In the next few days, the academics expect Barisan to focus only on marginal areas.

"Where the Prime Minister goes is the best indicator. They will go to hot seats. The PM and DPM are likely to focus on rural seats, while Adenan is better at convincing urban voters," Jeniri said.