

# SARAWAK ELECTION COULD SEE REPEAT OF BN'S 2004 GE WIN, ANALYSTS SAY

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BY RAM ANAND



The popularity of new Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem, coupled with the inability of the opposition parties in the state to unite and ensure one-on-one battles against BN could play into BN's hands to record a bigger win for them this year compared to the 2011 state elections. — Picture by Yusof Mat IsaKUALA LUMPUR, Feb 15 — Barisan Nasional's (BN) performance in the upcoming Sarawak state election could mirror the overwhelming support the ruling coalition gained in the 2004 federal election results, political analysts have said as the state prepares for polls that must be called before June this year.

The popularity of new Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem, coupled with the inability of the opposition parties in the state to unite and ensure one-on-one battles against BN could play into BN's hands to record a bigger win for them this year compared to the 2011 state elections, where BN won 55 state seats in a 71-seat assembly.

“I would draw comparisons with the 2004 elections, when Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took over as PM from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and oversaw a landslide win. This was because people saw Badawi [sic] as a leader who represented hope and gave him such a strong majority,” said Dr Faisal Hazi, associate professor at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

“The opposition had also failed to unite the same way they did in 2011. In 2011, they worked together to ensure one on one fights,” he told *Malay Mail Online*.

In 2004, Abdullah led BN to winning 198 seats in a 219-seat Parliament, one year after taking over from Dr Mahathir.

“The same applies here because Adenan is a popular leader. In 2011, there was some scepticism over Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud. But he is not very involved in the state leadership now,” Faisal added.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) professor Dr Jeniri Amir said that BN’s popular vote is expected to increase by at least 5 per cent in the next elections.

“Last time, they had 55 per cent of the popular support. This time, I expect that to climb to at least 60 per cent,” he told *Malay Mail Online*.

However, both Faisal and Jeniri said that the elections could into a “mess” for BN if Adenan and the state BN leadership are unable to settle differences between BN-friendly parties in the state.

The impasse is between Sarawak People’s United Party (SUPP) alongside Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) with their own splinter parties United People’s Party (UPP) and Parti Tenaga Rakyat Sarawak (Teras).

“The election is only a couple of months away, I don’t think we can see a solution by then. I don’t think Adenan has a solution to this problem. This could hamper BN’s performance in this election,” Faisal.

Jeniri said that the unresolved dispute might end up costing BN votes in Chinese majority areas but the party that is given the permission to use the BN logo would still turn out winners in rural areas.

“These parties have been naming their own candidates. If a three corner fight happens in the Chinese majority areas, the DAP will benefit from it. But in the rural and suburban areas, whichever BN party that is allowed to use the BN logo to contest can win,” he added.

Dr Arnold Puyok, who is the senior lecturer at the faculty of social sciences at Unimas, said that it is “very obvious” that BN would win the elections easily.

“Not only have the opposition parties failed to unite, they have also failed to counter Adenan effectively on the policy front,” he said.

He also said that the addition of 11 new seats following the Election Commission’s recent redelineation exercise would add to its advantage.

“BN is set to win with ber majorities in the Dayak, Muslim and Melanau areas. BN’s main challenge would be to break the opposition dominance in the urban areas,” he said.