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(Bernama) – The “politics of wellbeing”, popularised by Sarawak Chief Minister Adenan Satem can be a great advantage for Barisan Nasional to continue maintaining its dominance in the state, according to a political analyst.

Assoc Prof Stanley Bye Kadam Kia of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) said Adenan’s approach since taking office two years ago was seen as being able to increase the people’s support for BN at the coming state election.

Adenan’s approach differed vastly from that of his predecessor Abdul Taib Mahmud, who adopted the “politics of development” on fundamental matters such as the construction of schools and roads.

“However, the implementation of new policies such as the abolition of bridge tolls in the state, reduction of assessment tax and the abolition of land quit rents has become a new political strategy to win the hearts and minds of voters.

“This will lead to a shift and bring new hope for the people of Sarawak to vote and support Adenan’s leadership,” he told reporters after a roundtable discussion on the state elections.

The discussion was organised by the National Professors Council and was aimed at discussing issues related to the state election such as the support and voting trend, as well as the ability of the contesting parties to retain their seats.

Stanley was one of the panellists in the first session on Adenan's leadership and policies, together with political analysts Assoc Prof Dr Jeniri Amir of Unimas and Dr Lee Kuok Tiong of Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

Jeniri believed that the Chief Minister's strong character and his human touch would strengthen BN's hardcore support in rural and remote areas, thus posing a strong challenge for the opposition to defeat BN in Sarawak.

"Two-thirds of the 82 seats being contested are in the rural areas and nine out of 11 new seats are also in the rural areas. I expect the voting pattern will see BN strengthens its position in Sarawak as well as in the future," he said.

Nevertheless, Jeniri said several national issues such as the Goods and Services Tax and issues surrounding 1Malaysia Development Berhad would be raised and BN should be smart in tackling it.

Asked about the opposition's strength in the state, Lee said he was sceptical DAP could repeat its achievement in the 2011 state election given that some of its popular leaders were no longer in the party.

"The late Karpal Singh is no longer with them. They cannot bring Lim Guan Eng (Penang Chief Minister) who is now being linked to the controversial land issues. Overall, DAP is not as strong as before.

"Retaining their (the opposition) status quo may be the best they can achieve or the worst, they may lose four seats in the election," Lee said without disclosing the four seats.

Lee said he was confident that voters in the rural and interior areas would still remain solidly behind BN, as it was the only party that had fulfilled its promises and was committed to implementing its agenda of development in the state.

Lee was of the view that several national issues would not have a significant impact on the election and would be regarded as an 'abstract' among voters in the rural and remote areas. Regarding the Chinese voters, Lee said they would determine whether BN could secure a bigger victory and change Sarawak's political landscape in the future.

Adenan announced recently that the state legislative assembly would be dissolved on April 11 to make way for the state election.