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GPS key to federal stability

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BY RINTOS MAIL
tribunenew2019@gmail.com

KUCHING: Political analyst Datuk Dr Lee Kuok Tiung (*pic*) concurs that the federal government remains relatively stable despite growing tensions within the ruling coalition, with Sarawak’s GPS playing a crucial role.

Lee, an associate professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, said the current unity government commands about 151 parliamentary seats, comfortably above the 148-seat two-thirds threshold.

The coalition comprises Pakatan Harapan (PH) with 81 seats,

Barisan Nasional (BN) with 30, Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) with 23, Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) with six, Parti Warisan Sabah with three, and several other government-aligned MPs.

He said the present situation differed significantly from the volatile 2018-2022 period, which saw frequent party defections, changes in political alliances and two changes of prime minister following the collapse of the PH administration in 2020 and the subsequent fall of the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government in 2021.

“Unlike the volatile 2018-2022 period, there is already an anti-hopping law under Article 49A,” he said.

Article 49A, introduced through constitutional amendments in 2022,

provides for the disqualification of MPs who voluntarily resign from or cease to be members of the political party on whose ticket they were elected, subject to specified exceptions.

Lee said the political pressures currently were more evident in internal PKR fractures and growing disillusionment among PH supporters, particularly Democratic Action Party (DAP) voters.

“I believe the royalty and the East Malaysia sides are preferring stability,” he said.

He stressed that any federal change would be difficult without GPS, which holds 23 seats.

“Federal change cannot occur without Sarawak’s GPS 23 seats. Twenty-three seats is a very significant number,” he said.

Lee also pointed to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as the ultimate constitutional safeguard during any political transition.

“Under Articles 40(2) and 43(2) (a), the Yang di-Pertuan Agong has discretion in appointing a prime minister, who must be a member of the House of Representatives whom His Majesty judges is likely to command the confidence of the majority.

“Thus, should a government lose its majority or Parliament becomes deadlocked, the King’s constitutional role would be central in determining who is able to form the next administration,” he said.





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SUMMARIES

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