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Expect many multi-cornered fights in Sabah – analyst

LABUAN: An analyst anticipates five — or six-cornered contests in many of the 73 seats up for grabs in the Sabah state election later this month.

Romzi Ationg, a political researcher at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), said these multi-cornered fights can be expected in at least 70 per cent of the total number of seats.

Nomination in the state election is set for Saturday and polling is on September 26.

He also said that many of these candidates are likely to be new faces who are already seen to be fostering rapport with villagers and getting ready for the electoral battle.

The new faces will come from among emerging young leaders as well as government retirees, business leaders and representatives of NGOs, Romzi said in an interview with Bernama here.

“These new faces are expected to add quorum in the nomination process, raising the number of the contestants (in each constituency) to more than two. These new faces are now seen more often with villagers and village committees.

“They are actually non-partisan, and are certainly going to be standing as independent candidates,” he said.

Romzi said that based on his research, the multi-cornered fights will be in the Malay-majority



Romzi

constituencies in the Sabah east coast and west coast due to the presence of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), Barisan Nasional (BN), and Parti Cinta Sabah (PCS) led by former foreign minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman.

He also said that the announced return to active politics of former Sabah chief minister Tan Sri Chong Kah Kiat to lead the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) he founded will also contribute to a rise in the number of candidates.

The snap election will also see

the return of Sabah-based old parties, one of them speculated to be USNO, as well as newly-registered parties, he said.

Romzi, who undertakes research on contemporary Malaysian and global politics, said the snap election will actually be a fight between Perikatan Nasional (PN)/Barisan Nasional (BN) and Warisan Plus.

“To political pundits and observers, the Sabah election is always unique as old and new issues are bound to crop up during the campaign period,” he said.

The analyst said speculation that former chief justice Tan Sri Richard Malanjum may contest the election has also intensified after Parti Warisan Sabah president Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal did not dismiss this outright.

“This certainly will add to the number of new faces in the nomination list. However, we do not rule out the possibility of withdrawal of some of the new faces, especially those who will sign up to contest as independents,” he said.

PN in Sabah comprises Bersatu, PAS, Sabah STAR and Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) while BN has Sabah Umno, MCA, MIC and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs). Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) is an ally.

Warisan Plus has Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan), DAP, Amanah and PKR as well as Upko. — Bernama