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Sabah-Family
SAME BLOOD, DIFFERENT IDEOLOGIES COMMON IN SABAH

By: Muammar Kamaruddin

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- As they say, there is nothing impossible in politics. The most bitter foes can become the best of friends overnight and vice-versa.

The same can be said of the politicians in Sabah. In fact, in certain aspects, the situation is unique from other places.

Besides party-hopping which is common in Sabah, blood ties is no guarantee that the family members would have the same liking, stand or even support for a political party in the state.

Sabah's anti-hop law has been annulled by the court and presently, there is no stopping of any elected assemblyman from hopping to another party without having to vacate his seat as required by the anti-hop law.

For instance, after winning the Bingkor seat in the 1994 state election, a very influential assemblyman Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan left Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) led by his elder brother Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan to help form the Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) but subsequently left to join Akar Bersatu (Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat), one of the nine BN components.

PBS, which formed the state government after winning 25 of the 48 seats, however, was in a limbo when many of its victorious assemblymen including Jeffrey dumped the party to embrace Barisan Nasional, resulting in the collapse of the PBS government after 22 days of returning to power.

Jeffrey has since returned to the PBS fold and is expected to be fielded to defend Bingkor.

Three children of the late Tun Mustapha Harun, a former Chief Minister and founder of Usno (the defunct United Sabah National Organisation) provide another example of political differences existing within the same family in the state.

Although Datuk Amir Kahar, Datuk Badaruddin and Dayang Maimunah followed the footsteps of their late father by joining Umno in the early days of its expansion to Sabah in 1991, their differing political affiliations were visible in the 1994 state election.

In that election, Amir Kahar stood and won in Banggi on a PBS ticket while Dayang Maimunah remained the Kudat Umno division wanita chief.

Amir Kahar returned to Umno's fold soon after the election and it is said he has been once again chosen as a candidate in the coming polls.

On the other hand, Dayang Maimunah left Umno last year and has been picked as a candidate of Parti Barisan Rakyat Sabah Bersekutu (Bersekutu) for Bengkoka.

Bersekutu is led by another former Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh, who has also quit Umno prior to this.

Badaruddin is said to be the likely PBS candidate standing against his brother (Amir Kahar) in Banggi.

Albeit the different political leanings, Sabah is also not devoid of family members supportive of the same political party.

For example, the Bersekutu's candidate for Banggi in this election is Ghazali Harris, a son of Harris.

Sulabayan assemblyman Datuk Nasir Tun Sakaran Dandai, the son of former Sabah Umno Liaison chief Sakaran, who is now the Yang diPertua Negeri.

In the last state election, Sulabayan was won by Sakaran, who later became the first Chief Minister under the Rotation System introduced by the Prime Minister and BN Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

After he was appointed the Yang diPertua Negeri in 1995, a by-election was held and Nasir was elected to the seat.

Datuk Dr James Ongkili, a former federal minister and the Deputy Chief Minister in the now defunct Berjaya Party, also has a brother in Dr Maximus Ongkili, who is a full-time politician.

Maximus, who is PBS deputy president, won the Langkon state seat in the last election and is also the MP for Bandau.

Berjaya ruled Sabah from 1976 to 1985 with Harris as chief minister.

-- BERNAMA

MK MAI TS