

Hodge podge of voters in Likas

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IMAM Ghani Nawawi often uses the phrase "campur campur" (a hodge podge) to describe the people and area under his care.

Ghani is the Imam of the mosque at Kampung Likas — one of the 36 villages in the Likas state constituency.

The village is perhaps one of the most densely populated areas in the 102 sq km constituency tucked between the hills of Inanam and the South China Sea.

Included within the sea boundaries of the constituency are five islands notably Pulau Gaya known for its large population of Filipino legal and illegal immigrants.

Nearly half of downtown Kota Kinabalu makes up the southern tip of the Likas seat while its northern fringes reach until the Telipok area where an industrial park has been set up on land which farmers had once tilled.

Located just 8km north of Kota Kinabalu, Likas started out as a sparse Bajau fishing community settlement amid a largely mangrove swamp.

Born in the village 57 years ago, Yusof Ghani remembers the time when his nearest neighbour was a boat ride away.

"Before it was all jungle. There were only houses along the river," said Yusof who was made the Kampung Likas chief three years ago.

Much of the mangrove swamp has since been cleared and reclaimed to make way for an expanding population at the village that now stands at about 15,000 and includes Sungai, Brunei, Suluk, Kagayan, Ubian, Jawa and even Pakistani communities.

Apart from the 36 villages, there are another two large crowded squatter colonies in Likas, namely Kampung Lembaga Padi and Kampung Bakau with a total population of 6,000.

There are also dozens of smaller immigrant squatter settlements around Likas.

Yusof said in all, the Likas population was now about 70,000.

The population growth of Likas has been in tandem with the development of the area where successive state governments have put up various sorts of landmarks that were completed by their successors.

LIKAS CONSTITUENCY

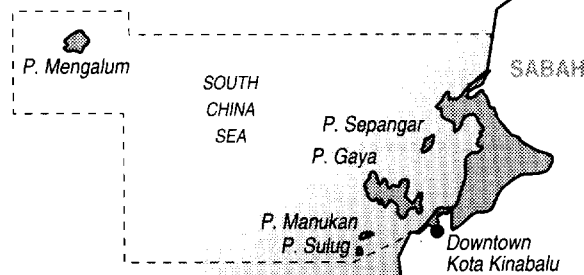
Size: 102sq km (Includes five islands - Pulau Gaya, Pulau Sepangar, Pulau Manukan, Pulau Sulug and Pulau Mengalum)

Polling districts: 10 (Karambunai, Gudon, Tobobon, Inanam Laut, Likas Timor, Likas, Pulau Gaya, Bandar Selatan, Bandar Utara, Likas Baru)

Voters: 26,196 (Year 2000 electoral rolls, updated June 27, 2001)
Muslim bumiputras (60%)
Chinese (31%)
Non-muslim bumiputras (9%)

Results for the March 13, 1999 elections in Likas

- 1) **Datuk Yong Teck Lee (BN)** - 9,110 votes (won with a 4,962 majority)
- 2) **Dr Chong En Leong (PBS)** - 4,148
- 3) **Datuk Harris Salleh (Bersekutu)** - 3,576
- 4) **Zulkifli Laja (Setia)** - 318
- 5) **Yahya Kassim (Pas)** - 200
- 6) **Saudin Kadis (Ind)** - 100



It started 30 years ago with the construction of the 28-floor cylindrical Yayasan Sabah building that was one of four of its type in the world.

Also built during the time Parti Usno was in power was a coastal highway linking the building to Kota Kinabalu.

Construction of the Yayasan Sabah building was only completed in mid-1970's during the reign of Parti Berjaya. It was at this time that the state's first private hospital, the Sabah Medical Centre and the Likas Sports Complex, were also built.

The medical centre was finished in the tenure of the Parti Bersatu Sabah government which initiated the construction of the RM450mil state legislative assembly building and the RM30mil city mosque.

Again both projects were completed after Barisan Nasional took over the reins of government in 1994.

But the crown jewel of Barisan's achievements in Sabah has been setting up of the University Sabah Malaysia and its picturesque hilltop RM1.3bil campus that faces Mount Kinabalu in the east and Likas Bay in the west.

UMS as it's known, has 6,000 students, some of whom are staying in many of the new housing estates that have sprung up in the vicinity of the university's campus.

Also on the cards for Likas is the Sepanggar Bay naval base that is to be second largest in the country after Lumut and a federal department office complex.

Ask Imam Ghani about how he

would describe the Likas seat in its entirety today, the phrase the soft spoken spiritual leader of Brunei descent succinctly states: "*campur campur*."

"There's everything in Likas. There is a town, squatters, kampung houses, houses of VIPs, kampung shops, supermarkets, factories, and so many others," he added.

Indeed at Kampung Likas, modest wooden kampung houses are just a stone's throw from concrete bungalows of "orang VIP" many of whom bought up land in the area in the 1970s.

Three of Sabah's Yang DiPertua Negrus — the late Tun Fuad Stephens, Tun Mohd Said Keruak and present Tun Sakaran Dandai — together with many other politically influential figures have their homes in Likas side by side with villagers.

Likas is also home to a large number of civil servants who make up a quarter of the constituency's 26,172 voters.

After 1993 when the Election Commission re-drew the electoral boundaries, Likas that was once a Chinese majority seat became a constituency where 60% of voters are Muslim bumiputras.

Chinese now make up 31% of the voters while non-Muslim bumiputras comprise the remaining 9% under the delineation exercise that came into effect in the 1999 state elections.

As Imam, Ghani keeps in touch with the people and is aware of the

issues that are likely to sway them in the coming by-election for Likas.

"Many are talking about the phantom voters issue," he said, referring to the presence of phantom voters in the 1999 Likas electoral rolls that resulted in a court decision nullifying the state election results for the constituency and paving the way for the by-election.

He said a plan to relocate some 7,000 Pulau Gaya squatters, whom authorities say are Malaysians, to Telipok is another factor.

Ghani said Likas voters could also be using the poll to send a strong message about Barisan's two-year rotation of the chief minister's post and the coalition's 100-day promise of turning around the Sabah economy.

For the past 16 years, Likas has been the stronghold of Sabah Progressive Party president Datuk Yong Teck Lee.

Now, Yong's candidacy depends on his eligibility to contest in the by-election and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the Barisan chairman will make the final call.

However, the Elections returning officer Alijus Sipil will be the decision maker on the nomination if the Prime Minister decides to field Yong.

Whoever the Barisan candidate is will then find out whether Likas' "*campur campur*" voters are still putting a cross on the *dacing* or on Opposition symbols.