

Pakatan inroads likely in BN's last bastion

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SABAH From only two representatives, the Sabah opposition benches are likely to get more crowded following Sunday's polls.

On the ground sentiments indicate that at least seven state seats will fall to non-BN parties - a remarkable improvement, if not a change of government in what is possibly BN's final fortress.

These seats are:

- Api-api (Christina Liew, PKR)
- Kapayan (Dr Edwin Bosi, DAP)
- Klias (Lajim Ukin, PKR)
- Sri Tanjong (Chan Foong Lin, DAP)
- Tamparuli (Wilfred Bumburing, PKR)
- Bingkor (Jeffrey Kitingan, Star)
- Kuala Penyu (John Ghani, PKR)

Most of the state seats which will go to non-BN parties are those where BN had actually failed in terms of popular votes in 2008, but won as a result of multi-cornered fights.

SABAH Although Sabah is also teeming with multi-cornered tussles this time around, the stronger of the parties, PKR and DAP, which split up anti-BN votes in 2008 have avoided clashing against each other in this polls.

Stronger Independent candidates like John Ghani in Kuala Penyu, who lost by a whisker in 2008, is also contesting on the PKR ticket on Sunday.

However, mutli-cornered fights may hand a victory to the BN in two of the state seats located in Kota Kinabalu - the epicentre for the Sabah 'Ini Kali Lah' movement:

Luyang

Melanie Chia (SAPP) vs Hiew King Cheu (DAP) VS Agnes Shim (MCA) vs Jafery Jomion (Star)

Won by SAPP's Melanie Chia in 2008, Luyang moved to the opposition bench when the party left the BN after the polls.

Today, Luyang is considered an SAPP stronghold, but a run-in between SAPP and Pakatan Rakyat leaders there on Tuesday indicate a close fight between Chia and DAP candidate Hiew King Cheu.

This may lead to a repeat of the Sandakan parliamentary seat where a clash among BN, DAP and PKR handed BN's VK Liew a victory of only 176 votes.

MCA's Agnes Shim, a long time NGO leader in the community and Sabah MCA's first ever female candidate, is also the more formidable of BN candidates within the Kota Kinabalu constituency.

Likas

Chin Shu Ying (BN) vs Junz Wong (DAP) vs Yong Teck Lee (SAPP) vs Dr Martin Ho (Star)

Traditionally won by the SAPP, the seat is incredibly important for the party, especially as it will this time determine if party president Yong Teck Lee will return to the state assembly after a long hiatus.

DAP candidate youngster Junz Wong, who is facing a vicious alleged womanising smear campaign, may be able to punch a hole in the SAPP support by riding on the Chinese anti-establishment wave.

But some voters in Kota Kinabalu are also considering splitting their votes by backing a non-BN federal coalition (i.e. Pakatan Rakyat) at parliament and giving a state party a chance at the state level.

Inanam

Eric Majimbun (SAPP) vs Roland Chia (PKR) vs Joseph Lantip (BN)

Located close to the capital city centre, the mixed seat of Inanam is located within the Sepanggar parliamentary constituency won by SAPP's Eric Majimbun with a staggering 11,000-plus votes against the DAP and PKR.

Popular in the port bay constituency even after SAPP's departure from the BN, Majimbun is this time contesting at state level in Inanam and is likely to take the

wind away from PKR's Roland Chia's sails.

PKR's de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim presence at a Chia-hosted event in Inanam last weekend, however, suggests changing tides.

More than 3000 people turned up for the rally, an astounding turnout in laid back Kota Kinabalu.

azlanVoting trends show voters in mixed seats are growing more and more anti-BN, but votes split between Chia and Majimbun could hand victory to the relatively unknown BN candidate.

It is interesting to note that latent anti-establishment sentiments are also evident among the Kadazandusun Murut community in more rural constituencies on the west coast.

Campaigners attribute much of this to the quiet work of churches, following the anti-Christian messages by BN allies in the peninsula.

Church bells ringing in change?

Most pertinent is the threat to burn Malay-language bibles which use the word 'Allah' by BN ally Perkasa president Ibrahim Ali, which is a sore point among the bumiputera community who worship in Bahasa Malaysia.

Seats which may be shaken by this, and dissatisfaction with incumbent representatives, include:

- Melalap;
- Kadamaian; and
- Matunggong.

If all the marginal seats also fall into Pakatan's laps, Sabah will see 13 opposition representatives out of 60 that make up the assembly, heralding a new political era for the state.

