

**Growing Sabah, Sarawak clout new headache for Najib, analyst says**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
**May 28, 2013**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 — Sabah and Sarawak are set to place new demands on Putrajaya following the crucial role the two east Malaysian states played in ensuring Barisan Nasional's (BN) survival in Election 2013, according a political analyst.

In an opinion piece for Singapore's The Straits Times, political science scholar James Chin pointed out that that the two Borneo states had contributed 47 of the 133 seats that the ruling BN coalition won during the May 5 general election.

"In other words, the Najib administration would have fallen without East Malaysia," Chin wrote.

Chin further noted that the proportion of seats was such that the two states, together with BN lynchpin Umno's 88, have now formed what he termed an "Umno+East Malaysia" government in Putrajaya.

The fact was not lost on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who swiftly doled out 20 full and deputy ministerial positions to East Malaysia.

Still, this was not enough to satiate some East Malaysian BN leaders, who have long complained that Putrajaya does not "honour" the 20 point safeguards written into the Malaysia Agreement, put in place to grant Sabah and Sarawak a high degree of autonomy from Putrajaya.

Soon after Najib announced his Cabinet, news broke that Sarawak's PRS decided to reject its appointments while SPDP was upset its four federal wins did not gain the party any federal post.

And while the dominant performance by PBB, helmed by long-serving Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Taib Mahmud, was rewarded with four ministerial positions, the bigger price to pay for Najib may be even less control over the goings-on in Kuching.

As it is, Sarawak is the only state in Malaysia where Umno (along with the MCA, Gerakan and MIC) does not have a presence. Chin added that there was a written agreement between Taib and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad when the latter was prime minister, that Umno will not establish branches in Sarawak as long as both were in power.

Also, Taib's clout is such that he was able to openly snub a probe by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), saying he believed the government body to be "naughty" and "dishonest" in its investigations.

The Sarawak chief minister was cast into the international spotlight last month after an environmental activist group released a video documentary alleging the state BN chief to have received millions of ringgit in kickbacks over land deals that have denuded the Borneo state.

But the demands of East Malaysia are not the only ones Najib must appease. His decision to handsomely reward the two states for their contributions in Election 2013 will "likely upset

the Malay civil servants from Peninsular Malaysia who are used to projecting Malay power may find themselves at odds with their political masters from the east," Chin wrote.

The need to mollify Malay conservatives will go directly against the rising demands by East Malaysia, particularly the majority Kadazan-Murut in Sabah and the Dayaks in Sarawak, who are unhappy with the Malay and Muslim-dominated power structure.

Chin said the two communities "will now assert their political power in BN and we may see changes in the way pro-Bumiputera policies and benefits are implemented in East Malaysia. For years, the KDM and Dayaks had been complaining that they were 'third-class' Bumiputera who do not get anything from the system that is supposedly biased towards those classified as Bumiputera."

Hakcipta © 2013 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/growing-sabah-sarawak-clout-new-headache-for-najib-analyst-says/>