

## **Usbo is BN's answer to Warisan, but...**

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**By Robin Augustin**

### **There's no chance that the NGO will become a political party, say analysts.**

PETALING JAYA: A political analyst has voiced doubt that the United Sabah Bumis Association (USBO) will eventually be registered as a political party, saying it is more likely to remain as an NGO used by Barisan Nasional to counter the influence of Parti Warisan Sabah.

Awang Azman Pawi, an associate professor at Universiti Malaya, told FMT he believed Usbo would be playing the role UMNO would have played if not for concerns over voter sentiments against parties based in Peninsular Malaysia.

“With sentiments on the ground geared towards Sabah parties, this makes it difficult for BN to counter Warisan’s growth through Umno, other West Malaysian-based political parties or Sabah BN parties seen to be subservient to UMNO,” he said.

Recently, it was reported that USBO, led by Pandikar Amin Mulia, had embarked on a state-wide roadshow to explain current issues to the people of Sabah.

It was also reported that Pandikar, who is the Dewan Rakyat speaker, had spoken of his willingness to go back into active politics. This has set off speculation that USBO could be turned into a political party.

Awang Azman said he didn’t foresee Umno allowing USBO to become a political party because it would not want to release its grip on Sabah to a Sabah-based party.

He said USBO would be the “local vehicle” that BN would use in its attempt to stop Warisan’s growth.

“Shafie Apdal’s influence in Sabah is growing and his efforts to unite the opposition under Warisan aren’t going unnoticed,” he added.

Shafie, a former UMNO vice-president and federal minister, is Warisan’s president. His deputy is Penampang MP Darell Leiking, who is a former PKR vice-president.

In December, it was reported that Warisan, then only a couple of months old, had already attracted about 30,000 members.

Another analyst, Arnold Puyok of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, also said he didn't foresee USBO becoming a political party or even a strong political force because it would be competing with parties already representing the Kadazan, Dusun and Murut communities.

"There are many Sabah-based parties fighting for Sabah issues already," he said.

The Sabah-based BN parties are Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO), Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs) and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

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