

## **Mary Yap banks on education to win over Tawau residents**

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**By Zam Yusa**

KOTA KINABALU: For Tawau MP Mary Yap, who has been in both the education and higher education ministries since 2013, it is only natural for schooling to take a prominent position in her constituency.

The local girl began her career as an educator in the 1970s.

“Education is also one of the five items on the manifesto for my constituency,” said Yap, a former super-principal of the Tawau Vocational College.

For the upcoming 14th general election (GE14), the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) legislator has given her manifesto the acronym “Peski”.

The P stands for “pendidikan” (education), E for entrepreneurship, S for social development, K for “keselamatan dan kebajikan” (security and welfare) and I for infrastructure.

Yap was appointed as federal deputy education minister in the Barisan Nasional (BN) government after the last general election in May 2013.

She later took up the position of deputy higher education minister, which she holds until today.

Yap was instrumental in Open University Malaysia setting up a base in the Bandar Sri Indah neighbourhood. At her urging, the Tawau Community College also introduced some culinary courses.

She added that several schools have been set up and monetary assistance given to the Tawau education office, parent-teacher associations and local educational institutions.

Besides these initiatives, more than 700 building, infrastructure and recreational projects have been completed in the constituency during her tenure as MP.

The Tawau hospital has also benefited from upgrades, including getting new CT scan machines.

“We’ve gained approval from the deputy health minister to get a mammogram machine and 15 dialysis machines for the Tawau hospital,” she said.

“Under the 2015 budget, we managed to get the hospital upgraded and built the Tawau health clinic.”

Efforts to spur the economy include entrepreneurship and skills training programmes.

Cash aid and other forms of assistance, like sewing machines, ovens and fishing boat engines, have also been distributed to the people.

Tawau resident Fadzlee Junaib told FMT that more local youths were now pursuing further education or skills training without needing to leave the area.

“They don’t have to go far from home to improve themselves, thanks to the efforts of the government,” he said.

### **Two of three state seats in BN’s hands**

Covering 6,125 sq km, Tawau has a population of 400,000, of which 57% are Bumiputeras.

In the last election, Yap won the seat with 21,331 votes, beating PKR’s Kong Hong Min by 4,979 votes. SAPP’s Chua Soon Bui and independent Ahmad Awang were left much further behind in the contest.

The parliamentary area covers the state constituencies of Sri Tanjong, Balung and Apas.

Sri Tanjong was won by Sabah DAP chief Chan Foong Hin in 2013.

Balung is under Sabah speaker Syed Abas Syed Ali, who was assemblyman there from 1978 to 1981 under the Berjaya administration before winning the seat again in 2004 under Umno. He has been assemblyman there until today.

The Apas seat fell vacant following the death of Umno assemblyman Tawfiq Abu Bakar Titingan, who was Sabah youth and sports minister, on March 14.

Yap said the constituency and Sabah had lost a great leader in Tawfiq, who was battling an undisclosed illness for nine months at a hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

“His legacy as Apas assemblyman will live on. He was well loved and respected by the people as he looked after them very well,” she said.

FMT previously reported Sri Tanjong assemblyman Chan as saying that Tawau faced perennial water and electricity problems.

He said the government’s move to indefinitely suspend barter trade with neighbouring nations had also hampered the consumer goods trading in the area, which comes under the supervision of the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom).

PBS’ Sri Tanjung leader Fung Len Fui, however, dismissed these claims, saying the water and electricity problems had long been solved.

While acknowledging that some businesses were affected by the suspension of barter trade, he said overall security in the area had been tightened.

This had boosted visitors’ confidence and the tourism industry, he added.

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