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# SABAH MCA: REBOOTING FOR GE15

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Briefing Document for GMC Engagement in Sabah



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# Sabah MCA – Rebooting for GE15

## *Executive Summary*

Sabah MCA, which was set-up in 1990 following UMNO's entry into East Malaysia, needs a strong leadership presence in the State to show Sabahans that the party's status as a National party has added political benefits over regional political sentimentalism currently swaying voters in Sabah. What's driving the rising S4S (Sabah for Sabahans and Sarawak for Sarawakians) tempo is the pent-up frustrations from Sabahans and Sarawakians of being "seemingly neglected" in respect of infrastructure development when compared with Peninsular Malaysia, while being "ravaged economically" for oil resources. Sabah MCA leadership must put themselves in the forefront of leading campaigns for betterment of Sabahans to push political statesmanship at the National level, not just in Sabah.

This needs to happen now and the current Sabah MCA leadership is not doing enough to be seen in the forefront of driving Sabahans' rights despite the current golden opportunity of being an Opposition party, which means it has a "No Holds Barred licence" to play up Sabahans' sentiments.

Although the political flavour in Sabah today is Parti Warisan Sabah, this party did not win the 14<sup>th</sup> General Elections (GE14) outright to earn its licence to form the state government, and it is only as strong as its coalition partners – UPKO and Pakatan Harapan (PH) Sabah – wills it, which is why Warisan's President, Datuk Seri Panglima Shafie Apdal, has had to entice former UMNO State Assemblymen to join his party to stabilise his government. Although Warisan is a multiracial party, it represents the ascendancy of Suluk political power which limits its sphere of influence to the Sabah East Coast, effectively from Lahad Datu to Tawau. This reflected the reality of the demographic change in this region where the illegal immigrants issue reached chronic level more than two decades ago, critically seen in the context of Kota Kinabatangan town, where 70% of residents are foreigners according to the 2010 Census. Warisan is therefore, politically, the weakest Sabah government in recent times, and may potentially be good for only one term if their coalition partners in PH – DAP, PKR, Amanah and now Bersatu – strike out on their own, especially since Bersatu now has the majority of former UMNO leaders and members in its domain. In GE14, Warisan and PH could not reach a pact to contest as a coalition which means it will be even more difficult in GE15 now that the common enemy, UMNO, is no longer in power.

What Sabah MCA needs to do now is to:

- **Deliver leadership:** Drive Sabah issues, speaking out without fear or favour;
- **Champion the community** by spearheading campaigns through ground engagements with NGOs; and,
- **Build alliances** at all levels – grassroots as well as with political allies.

For MCA, Sabah is potentially a test bed to make the case for Malaysian Malaysia to contrast the populist S4S sentiments. And to show that MCA indeed understands Malaysian Malaysia and puts Sabahan's interests first, Sabah MCA may perhaps be opened to all races instead of just ethnic Chinese, as an experiment for the party.

Strategically, if as a National party Sabah MCA cannot be seen to champion State interest above and over National interest in the next three to four years, it may have to even consider running in GE15 under an alternative ticket (via a Sabah-based coalition or even a Sabah-based party) to supplant the BN trust deficit and baggage associated with UMNO Sabah.

Hence, Sabah MCA must not discount or disregard anyone or any political parties for now.

## Role of Opposition

*Opposition puts forward to the people's alternative vision of the Malaysian nation from that of the government, and also acts as a guardian of the people to check the abuses and misuses of power, malpractices, corruption, and insensitivities of the Government to the basic needs and legitimate aspirations of the people.*

**Lim Kit Siang, 17 July 1984**

A paper presented at the Regional Conference on Political Parties and Democratisation in East Africa by Julius Kiiza of Makerere University outlined the role of the Opposition party. Kiiza stressed that in any democracy, the opposition parties perform several important functions which include:

- **Interest aggregation:** Political parties are important organs for aggregating the interests of the political community. This culminates in the articulation/ projection of certain preferences, values and ideologies into the policy and lawmaking process (eg in Parliament) and in the budgeting process;
- **Promoting responsible and reasoned debate.** It promotes “national conversation” and pushes democratic discussion to a higher level of political development and maturity;
- **Maintaining touch with voter-citizen** and demonstrating the relevance of politics to ordinary people, especially the oppressed, marginalised, disenfranchised.
- **Holding the government to account** for its commissions or omissions.
- **Presenting a viable alternative** to the incumbent government by designing alternative ideas, principles and policies for governing society. Should the party in power let the voters down, the “government-in-waiting” takes over the reign of power – through free and fair elections.
- **Acting as a training ground for future leaders.** Shadow cabinet ministers, for example, typically conduct serious party business in their designated portfolios;
- **Strengthening the culture of democracy** within the party and the political community;
- **Working with the Electoral Commission,** the mass media and civil society organisations to monitor and improve the quality of voter registration, civic education and electoral transparency;

According to Lim Kit Siang, if people lose confidence in the Opposition, it because it has become ineffective, either because of the Opposition's own failings or weaknesses or as a result of the deliberate government policy to emasculate the Opposition through undemocratic means, the higher interests of the nation are not being served.

Those are the referenced track for MCA today as an Opposition party dictated by the current party direction which has been encapsulated by the theme of “Providing Check & Balance; Prioritising Public Opinion”.

## Building Alliances – Way Forward to GE15

### Potential Seats for Sabah MCA in GE15

(Based on ethnic distribution)

No	Parliament	Won by	BN seat rep	Vote Majority	BI %	BBI %	Chinese %	Others %
1	P172 Kota Kinabalu	DAP	PBS	24,086	22.35	13.82	62.52	1.31
2	P186 Sandakan	DAP	LDP	11,521	43.9	5.71	49.29	1.09
3	P190 Tawau	PKR	PBS	4,727	60.71	4.91	33.56	0.82
4	P174 Penampang	Warisan	UPKO	23,473	13.95	51.79	32.56	1.71
5	P185 Batu Sapi	Warisan	PBS	4,619	65.06	4.09	30.03	0.82
6	P171 Sepanggar	Warisan	UMNO	12,984	55.25	24.63	18.98	1.14
7	P184 Libaran	Bersatu	UMNO	678	76.77	6.15	16.47	0.62
8	P173 Putatan	PKR	UPKO	2,339	69.24	14.35	15.43	0.99

Source: INSAP based on Election Commission data

No	DUN	Won by	BN seat rep	Vote Majority	BI %	BBI %	Chinese %	Others %
1	N16 Luyang	DAP	MCA	12,408	9.49	15.38	73.74	1.39
2	N14 Likas	DAP	LDP	7,902	12.76	13.76	72.0	1.48
3	N57 Sri Tanjong	DAP	PBS	9,383	31.88	4.64	62.38	1.1
4	N46 Tanjung Papat	DAP	Gerakan	1,816	46.09	3.26	50.05	0.6
5	N45 Elopura	DAP	Gerakan	6,647	42.65	7.12	48.86	1.37
6	N19 Kapayan	DAP	MCA	13,250	17.43	33.55	47.07	1.95
7	N15 Api Api	DAP	PBS	2,954	44.41	12.11	42.39	1.08
8	N44 Karamunting	Warisan	LDP	3,848	54.37	4.25	40.32	1.05
9	N13 Inanam	PKR	PBS	7,783	25.59	43.73	29.58	1.09
10	N17 Tanjung Aru	Warisan	PBS	4,610	65.33	11.21	22.61	0.85
11	N41 Gum Gum	Warisan	UMNO	598	67.66	10.99	20.93	0.42
12	N43 Sekong	Warisan	UMNO	2,035	75.44	3.92	20.03	0.6
13	N2 Tanjung Kapor	Warisan	LDP	2,992	57.56	22.61	19.37	0.46
14	N58 Merotai	Warisan	LDP	2,150	77.4	5.02	16.56	1.03
15	N35 Malalap	Warisan	PBS	293	30.32	53.52	15.55	0.61
16	N50 Lahad Datu	Warisan	UMNO	2,932	75.23	8.26	15.48	1.03
17	N42 Sungai Sibuga	UMNO	UMNO	2,184	79.97	4.45	14.9	0.69
18	N34 Liawan	Warisan	UMNO	1,382	43.71	40.32	14.84	1.14
19	N56 Apas	Warisan	UMNO	1,787	81.88	3.22	14.45	0.45
20	N9 Tamparuli	PBS	PBS	2,080	26.51	61.22	11.47	0.8

Source: INSAP based on Election Commission data

For Sabah MCA, **GE15 represents a season of opportunity** now that Barisan Nasional are left with just the three principal component parties – UMNO, MCA and MIC. This means that for Sabah BN in respect of the 25 parliament seats and 60 State seats, UMNO and MCA will get the split of seats in the whole state between themselves given that there are very few Indians in Sabah.

Based on ethnic composition:

There are **five parliament seats in which MCA could focus** in GE15 which are:

1. P172 Kota Kinabalu
2. P174 Penampang
3. P185 Batu Sapi
4. P186 Sandakan and,
5. P190 Tawau

For State DUN seats, **Sabah MCA could focus on at least nine seats** which are:

1. N13 Inanam
2. N14 Likas
3. N15 Api Api
4. N16 Luyang
5. N19 Kapayan
6. N44 Karamunting
7. N45 Elopura
8. N46 Tanjung Papat, and,
9. N57 Sri Tanjong

Compared with GE14 where Sabah MCA only contested in two State seats, N16 Luyang and N19 Kapayan, the additional seats which MCA could secure to contest in GE15 represents a quantum leap which requires immediate ground preparations today. What this means is that Sabah MCA has much work to do in respect of preparing for its GE15 machinery, but more importantly, it requires a strategic and tactical approach to engage voters now to win their hearts and minds for potential political ascendancy in GE15.

Strategically, this means establishing:

1. **Political cooperation with like-minded parties** to build trust and camaraderie towards establish closer working political relationship. This potentially means facilitating joint pre-election ground engagements with party members. This is important as the majority of political parties in Sabah are multiracial with exception of UPKO for ethnic Kadazandusun and Murut, Parti Kerjasama Anak Negeri Sabah and USNO Baru which are for Sabah bumiputeras. Multiracial parties are potential opponents for MCA in respect of Chinese-majority and mixed seats.
2. **Early engagement with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society** to work on programmes for social and economic advancement, especially in gender empowerment as well as the B40 poor.
3. **Opinion leaders** on specific issues such as environment, so that the spokesperson becomes the defacto “go-to” person when voters need help.
4. **Social media machinery** to ensure effective delivery of campaign messaging that will be required in GE15. The Sandakan parliamentary by-election in May 2019 showed just how the government, especially DAP, will leverage on social media to communicate with voters. Sabah MCA needs to develop better social media presence as it has literally no visibility online today.
5. **Media teams to produce videos and engage with media.** This will create identity for potential candidates and spokespersons.
6. **Familiarity with constituency issues.** Potential candidates needs to initiate direct engagements with resident communities to champion local issues in order to win hearts and minds for voters’ support.

To facilitate engagement between Sabah MCA with local parties, their current political strengths needs to be taken into account, looking at their seat strengths in parliament and the State assembly. Among the Opposition, the only parties with MPs and State Assemblymen are PBS (1 MP and 4 Assemblyman), STAR Sabah with (1 MP and 3 Assemblyman) and UMNO (1 MP and 1 Assemblyman). This means that Sabah MCA will stand as equals with MCA having 1 MP and 2 State Assemblymen in Peninsular Malaysia.

And **MCA is the only ethnic Chinese party in Sabah**, which is a key unique selling point that had not been emphasised enough. Although the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is seen as Chinese, this party is multiracial by its constitution, as is Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP). However, leveraging on ethnic card is not enough to draw Sabahans to join and support MCA if it does not stand out to champion local issues, including Sabah rights under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63). **MCA needs to show, in particular to the Sabah Chinese, why it can do better than State-based parties** like LDP, PBS or SAPP.

#### Political Coalitions in Sabah – Government

Party/Coalition	MP	ADUN
1. <b>Parti Warisan Sabah</b> – Multiracial	9	31
2. <b>UPKO</b> – Kadazandusun	1	4
3. <b>Pakatan Harapan</b> – Multiracial (DAP, PKR, Amanah, Bersatu)	11	17

#### Political Coalitions in Sabah – Opposition

1. <b>Barisan Nasional</b> – Multiracial (UMNO, MCA, MIC)	1	1
2. <b>Gabungan Bersatu Sabah</b> – Multiracial (PBS, STAR Sabah)	2	7
3. United Sabah Alliance – Multiracial (SAPP, Parti Perpaduan Rakyat Sabah)	0	0
4. Gagasan Sejahtera - Muslim (PAS)	0	0

#### Non-coalition National Parties – Opposition

1. Gerakan – Multiracial	0	0
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#### Non Coalition Sabah-based Party – Opposition

1. <b>Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS)</b> – Multiracial	1	0
2. Liberal Democratic Party – Multiracial	0	0
3. Parti Kerjasama Anak Negeri Sabah – Bumiputera	0	0
4. Parti Cinta Sabah – Multiracial	0	0
5. USNO Baru – Bumiputera	0	0
6. Parti Kebangsaan Sabah – Multiracial	0	0
7. Parti Gagasan Rakyat Sabah (New - Multiracial)	0	0

Total: 22 Major Parties in Sabah

The key reason why Sabah MCA must be seen working hand-in-hand with Sabah-based political parties is to create a refreshed identity to supplement its icon as a National-party. **Sabah MCA is currently perceived as a subset of its parent, giving the image that Sabah leaders do not have authority** to decide what's best for Sabah. Voters buy the local-party propaganda that Sabah MCA, like Sabah UMNO, cannot make decisions without

Federal consent. This was especially apparent since 2015 where Sabah MCA State Liaison Committee was helmed by Federal leaders instead of locals due to internal conflict. This changed in November 2018 when new MCA President Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong appointed Lu Yen Tung as Sabah MCA chairman. **Sabah MCA must now remonstrate that Sabah MCA leaders had been made Senators in the past, and that State MCA leaders had served in the Sabah cabinet.**

The advantage of being a National-party rather than a state party has also not been adequately sold to voters. **National parties provide a bigger platform and wider scope of service for aspiring Sabahan youths to develop as a politician** compared with the limited scope and regional focus of State-based parties like PBS and SAPP, for example. This **facilitates more rounded development of local political leaders to better serve Sabahans at the state and federal levels.**

### **Extending Sabah MCA's political reach**

Engagement with Sabah-based parties must be facilitated by Sabah MCA as an outreach to voters. For example, **many current Sabah MCA leaders are not well known outside the party, and this has to be addressed immediately.**

Each Opposition party has different sets of followers in different localities with signature political strengths. Notably, there are six main political coalitions in Sabah today. The Sabah government is a direct coalition of Parti Warisan Sabah with UPKO and Pakatan Harapan. This coalition is headed by Warisan President Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal, who is current Sabah Chief Minister. This coalition is not regarded to be stable as Warisan on its own won only 19 State seats in GE14, although it has now a sizeable majority with defections from UMNO State Assemblymen.

As Sabah MCA is in the Sabah Barisan Nasional now headed by Datuk Seri Panglima Bung Mokhtar Radin, there are two other Sabah based Opposition coalitions which Sabah MCA can potentially work with. These are:

- **Gabungan Bersatu Sabah (GBS)** spearheaded by PBS; and,
- **United Sabah Alliance (USA)** spearheaded by SAPP.

The strength of GBS is that it unites the strategic influences of Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan with his brother Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan to consolidate the Kadazandusun and Murut (KDM) votes. However, both Pairin's PBS and Jeffrey's STAR Sabah are multiracial which means neither party has political need of Sabah MCA as a partner in Sabah affairs and administration but would consider MCA as an ally for National affairs and issues, especially for legislations in Parliament.

The USA was conceived as a united coalition of Sabah-based political parties. However, as GE14 demonstrated, the USA failed to unite the Sabah-based parties as Parti Cinta Sabah, Parti Harapan Rakyat Sabah (just recently dissolved by Datuk Seri Panglima Lajim Ukin, the paramount leader of the Bisaya, to join Bersatu) and STAR Sabah left the coalition after a breakdown in seat negotiations. USA's formula to working with PH was for National parties to contest some parliament seats and for PH to forgo all DUN seats. PH walked out from this ultimatum in GE13 and GE14. The USA too is a multiracial coalition, and although it sentimentally does not require Sabah MCA as a partner in Sabah affairs and administration, logically it would make sense to partner with Sabah MCA because the USA does not have any elected representatives at the Sabah State Assembly or Parliament presently. At least, with Sabah MCA in USA, it is able to convey its political suggestions for action through the MCA and BN leadership on issues of State and National interest.

The last coalition in Sabah is the Gagasan Sejahtera spearheaded by PAS. With UMNO and PAS link-up at the Federal level, this consolidation of Muslim votes may benefit Sabah MCA when contesting in mixed seats. However, Sabah PAS has been a rogue element which had often times worked out of sync with National PAS leaders. Therefore, it is highly risky for Sabah MCA to be associated with Sabah PAS, which is super zealous on religion.

#### *Engagement with PBS*

PBS's strength is the connectedness of its former president Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan to the Kadazandusun community. As Huguan Siou, Pairin is the paramount leader of the Kadazandusun and this is a life long title, which means even current PBS president Datuk Seri Panglima Maximus Ongkili does not command the same respect.

Nevertheless, PBS has deep linkages with the KDMs and working with PBS will expose Sabah MCA leaders to the KDM community. This will help MCA in getting to know local KDM leaders overall. PBS's strength and influence cover Sabah interior from Pensiangan to Ranau, and urban areas of Beaufort, Kota Kinabalu, Tuaran, Sepanggar, Kota Belud, Kota Marudu, Kudat, Beluran, Sandakan, Lahad Datu and Tawau.

Chinese PBS leaders are based in the major towns and having been in government until GE14, they are as well connected, if not better connected with the Chinese community than Sabah MCA leaders. Leaders like Dr Yee Moh Chye had been a Sabah Deputy Chief Minister for many terms.

#### *Engagement with SAPP*

SAPP's influence is waning but its president Datuk Yong Teck Lee is still a respected leader among the Chinese community. A multiracial party, SAPP spearheads the coalition known as the United Sabah Alliance (USA) which, though weak, is well known among Sabahans as a champion of Sabah issues based on MA63. Although it is easy for Sabah MCA to work with SAPP and the USA, GE13 and GE14 has shown that SAPP and USA draws a hardline on allocation of seats which had driven away potential allies. SAPP and USA are non-negotiable that Sabah parties take the total allocation of State Assembly seats and will only negotiate with National parties on Parliament seats. Despite its waning influence today, SAPP knows the Sabah political ground well, especially Chinese seats, which its leaders had contested and won at the height of its power in the 1990s. SAPP adviser and USA chairman Datuk Mohd Noor Mansoor, is a respected Bajau leader who was formerly Parti Berjaya Secretary-General and Minister of Finance during the Harris Salleh administration.

#### *Engagement with STAR Sabah*

STAR Sabah president Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan was the pioneer of Sabah for Sabahan movement and spent a few years as a political prisoner at Kamunting when Dr Mahathir Mohamad was Prime Minister. That incarceration made Jeffrey is an icon of Sabah's struggle for emancipation from Putrajaya and he is one of the leading activist restoration of Sabah's rights under MA63. Engagement with STAR Sabah will boost Sabah MCA's profile among the KDM community. However, STAR Sabah's sphere of influence is limited to Tambunan and Keningau, the KDM heartland.

However, Jeffrey is a strategic thinker and he will only work with Sabah MCA leaders if it benefits him and STAR Sabah. Jeffrey wants STAR Sabah to gain more support and recognition from the Sabah Chinese in which he currently lacks in appeal. Therefore, he will work with Sabah MCA to gain better recognition and standing in the Chinese community, and Sabah MCA's engagement with him should be conditioned to exposing its leaders to the KDM community, quid pro quo.



### *Engagement with Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah*

This is a Murut-based party whose president Tan Sri Joseph Kurup is slowly stepping aside for his son Arthur to take charge. However, PBRs's sphere of influence is limited to only Pensiangan, the Murut heartland. PBRs has been politically lost as it announced it was quitting Barisan Nasional after GE14 and had tried to join the Pakatan Harapan but was spurned. Thereafter, PBRs announced its return to BN, but its status is unclear. PBRs is now seen to be associated with Gabungan Bersatu Sabah headed by PBS. Engagement with PBRs will help Sabah MCA reach an audience of Muruts when needed. Like any purposeful engagement with STAR Sabah, Sabah MCA's engagement with PBRs should be also be quid pro quo.

### *Parti Kerjasama Anak Negeri Sabah (Anak Negeri)*

This is a new Sabah bumiputera party founded in 2017 by former PBS Secretary-General Datuk Henrynus Amin. Henrynus made an unsuccessful bid to challenge Dr Maximus Ongkili for the PBS presidency and after his defeat, he established Anak Negeri by taking over a dormant Sabah party. Although Anak Negeri contested in two Parliament seats and eight DUN seats mostly in the KDM strongholds, it did not win any seat. Henrynus is close to MCA as former MCA Treasurer-General Tan Sri Lau Yin Pin launched BN's Strategic Engagement Plan with KDMs using Henrynus as the chief coordinator during GE13. This RM2 million engagement programme to unite the KDM community for PBS, UPKO and PBRs under "Operasi Tataba", was funded by the Prime Minister's Office.

### *Parti Cinta Sabah*

Parti Cinta Sabah was founded by Datuk Wilfred Mojilip Bumburing, a former Sabah Deputy Chief Minister in the Pairin-PBS administration. Essentially, PCS has no political influence outside Tamparuli, which is Bumburing's base. This is a largely KDM party, although multiracial by constitution. Bumburing is a pragmatic politician who will work with any party that will further PCS's interest. What he wants is to be part of a successful coalition to gain appointment into the State Cabinet, or as a Federal legislator. He successfully won the Tamparuli DUN seat in GE13 defeating incumbent Datuk Jahid Jahim, the current PBS Secretary-General, who retook the seat in GE14.

### *USNO Baru*

USNO Baru has had a new revival during the recent Sandakan Parliamentary by-election where former Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin campaigned for PBS in Pulau Berhala and Sim Sim areas. USNO is a Muslim bumiputera party founded by Tun Mustapha Harun, the first Chief Minister of Sabah in 1966. The party dissolved when UMNO entered Sabah in 1990. USNO Baru's political influence is untested, but Pandikar has been the President of the United Sabah Bajau Organisation (USBO). Pandikar's promotion of USNO Baru in Facebook indicates that he may almost certainly become the new party president. USNO's influence was previously limited to Northern Sabah from Kota Belud to Kudat, and from Beluran to Lahad Datu, as well as the lower West Coast from Beaufort to Sindumin.

### *Parti Gagasan Rakyat Sabah (PGRS)*

This is a new party multiracial founded after Sabah MCA chairman, Datuk Francis Goh, failed in his GE14 election bid for the Kapayan DUN seat. At its recent AGM on 28 April 2019, former MCA Luyang State Assemblyman Datuk Hiew King Cheu, who also quit MCA after GE14, was elected as Deputy President. Francis Goh was made party adviser. This new party is still finding its legs and welcomes political cooperation with all entities. Ultimately, PGRS may seek to join the ruling Sabah coalition with Parti Warisan to offer its

experience and engagement with the Chinese community. The recent party AGM saw election of the supreme council comprising former Sabah MCA officials as well as some from UPKO. PGRS is financially strong because its adviser Francis Goh owns Kinsabina, one of the leading property developers in Sabah. PGRS is expected to make Kapayan and Luyang as its strongholds in due course as Francis was Sabah MCA State Liaison Committee deputy chairman cum Penampang MCA Division chairman while Hiew was a former DAP Sabah Chairman as well as DAP Member of Parliament for Kota Kinabalu and State Assemblyman for Luyang before quitting DAP in 2013 to join MCA in August 2014.

#### *Parti Kebangsaan Sabah*

This party is helmed by Thomas Anggan as president and founded in 2013. There is little information about this party which has not won any seat after contesting in GE3 and GE14. This is a multiracial party which is expected to welcome cooperation with all parties. Its strength is untested and does not have any strongholds.

#### **Engagement with NGOs & Civil Society**

Besides political parties, there are key opinion leaders in Sabah particularly on environmental protection. Organisations such as PACOS Trust and SEPA (Sabah Environmental Protection Association) wield powerful environmental lobbies in Sabah and they have influenced state government decisions in relocating a powerplant for Sandakan as well as halting the campaign to open the Meliau basin for coal mining.

Additionally, organisations such as Sabah Women's Action-Resource Group (SAWO) and Sabah Women Entrepreneurs & Professionals Association (SWEPA) are leading feminist activists which had champion the cause of women and gender equality in Sabah. Facilitating engagements with these social champions will help Sabah MCA to increase its appeal across a broader spectrum of society.

To develop linkage with Sabah professionals, Sabah MCA must link up with Sabah Law Association (SLA), Malaysian Medical Association Sabah Chapter, Sabah International Hotel Association, Institution of Engineers (Sabah), Institution of Surveyors (Sabah), Sabah Computer Society, Malaysian Institute of Accountants Sabah Chapter, among others, to work with these industry leaders to tap opinions and suggestions which will be useful in crafting policies impacting industries and human resource development in Sabah.

Given the strong Christian and Muslim activism in Sabah, Sabah MCA must also engage with the lay leaders and clergy of All Saints Cathedral, Basel Church of Malaysia, Glory Christian Centre, Sidang Injil Borneo, Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish among Christians, and the Majlis Ugama Islam Sabah (MUIS) and local masjid and surau community leaders, to facilitate promotion of religious harmony and ethnic unity in Sabah.

The combined effort of these engagements will have the net effect of placing Sabah MCA leaders and members closer with the people and therefore provide the opening for direct political engagement during election. Such engagements should be undertaken as a long term effort to not only get to know the leaders of the NGO, but also the programmes being implemented on the ground and its benefits to the communities receiving such assistance.

List of Sabah NGOs for potential engagements:

#### *Welfare & Charity*

- Pertubuhan Bagi Orang-orang Pekak Sabah
- Persatuan Bagi Orang-orang Pekak Sandakan
- Persatuan Kebajikan Balu KK

- Persatuan Kebajikan Kanak-kanak
- Persatuan Perkhidmatan Taman Asuhan Kanak-kanak Sabah (TASKA)
- Persatuan Rumah Amal Cheshire Sabah
- Persatuan Warganegara Tertua Sabah
- Pertubuhan Bagi Orang Buta Sabah
- Pertubuhan Bagi Orang Buta Sabah Sandakan
- Bukit Harapan
- Sekolah Seri Mengasih
- Persatuan CHILD - Caring and Helping Individuals Learn and Develop

#### *Health Care & Medical*

- Sabah Medical Centre
- Malaysian Medical Association Sabah Chapter
- Persatuan Barah Sabah
- Persatuan Buah Pinggang Sabah
- Persatuan Diabetes Malaysia Cawangan Sabah
- Persatuan Kesihatan Jiwa Sabah
- Hospital Bukit Padang
- Persatuan Tabung Rawatan Pesakit Jantung Sabah (SOS)
- Persatuan Pencegah Batuk Kering Sabah (SABATA)
- Persatuan Thalassaemia Sabah
- St. John Ambulans Malaysia Cawangan Sabah
- Persatuan Bulan Sabit Merah Cawangan Sabah
- Pemadam
- Sabah Medical Association
- Persatuan Perancang Keluarga Sabah
- Persatuan Perkhidmatan Paliatif KK
- Persatuan Pemulihan Kusta Malaysia Sabah
- Parkinson's Diseases Association
- Malaysian Urological Association
- Malaysian Society of Pathologist
- Malaysian Psychiatric Association
- Malaysian AIDS Council
- Persatuan Diabetes Malaysia
- Dermatological Society of Malaysia
- Malaysian Spinal Injuries Association
- Malaysian Society of Infectious Diseases
- Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society
- Lion's Life-Line Leukaemia Fund
- KL Society of the Deaf (KLSD)
- Cancer Web Malaysia
- Nshine Counselling Service
- Agape Counselling Centre Malaysia

#### *Youth & Sports*

- SAFA (Sabah Amateur Football Association)
- Outward Bound School
- Kiwanis Club of KK
- Echo Rover Scout Crew

- Boys' Brigade in Sabah.
- The Scout Association Of Malaysia (Sabah)
- Kumpulan Pengakap E ( Terbuka ) KK
- Pergerakan Pemuda Malaysia ( YMM )
- Special Olympics Sabah
- Young M'sian Movement, Sabah

#### *Recreation*

- KERMAH
- Kiwanis Club of KK
- Intan Junior Chamber
- Kelab Rotari Kota Kinabalu Selatan
- Outward Bound School
- Alumini SBPS

#### *Commerce & Consumer*

- House Buyers Association
- KKCCC (KK Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry)
- Sabah United Chinese Chambers of Commerce
- Sabah Bumiputera Chamber of Commerce
- Sabah Timber Industries Associations
- Dewan Perniagaan Bumiputera Sabah
- Dewan Perniagaan dan Perindustrian Kadazandusun Sabah
- Dewan Perniagaan dan Perindustrian Tionghua Kota Kinabalu

#### *Consumer & Trade Unions*

- Federation of Malaysia Consumers Association (FOMCA)
- Consumer Association of Penang (CAP)
- Sabah Petroleum Industry Workers Union
- Malaysian Trades Union Congress

#### *Professional*

- Sabah Law Association
- Sabah International Hotel Association
- The Institution of Engineers, Sabah
- The Institution of Surveyors, Sabah
- Sabah Surveyors Board
- Sabah Computer Society

#### *Women*

- Sabah Women Entrepreneurs & Professionals Association
- Women's Crisis Centre
- Women's Aid Organisation
- Widow Welfare Association Sabah

#### *Arts*

- Koisaan Cultural Development Institute (KDI)
- Malaysian Invention And Design Society (Minds) Kota Kinabalu Chapter
- Sabah Computer Society

### *Social*

- Lions International
- Lions Club of KK (Host)
- The Sabah Society
- Kiwanis Club of KK
- Y2K Pansea Convention
- Toastmaster Club Skan
- Toastmasters Club KK
- Toastmasters Club Tawau
- Toastmasters International
- Toastmasters District 51
- KK Jaycees
- Intan Junior Chamber
- Lahad Datu Junior Chamber
- Junior Chamber International
- Junior Chamber M'sia
- Tanjung Aru Junior Chamber
- Rotary Club of Tawau
- Rotary Club of KK (District District 3300 and 3310)

### *Religion*

- Persatuan Kebajikan Pelajar Muslim Sabah
- All Saints Cathedral
- Basel Church of M'sia, Sabah
- Glory Christian Centre
- Sidang Injil Borneo
- Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish

### *Others*

- Malaysian Invention & Design Society (Minds) KK Chapter
- Sabah Nature Club
- Outward Bound School
- Pemadam
- Partners for Wetlands Project (WWF M'sia)
- WWF Fund (WWF Malaysia)
- SEPA (Sabah Environmental Protection Association)

# Top hot-button issues in Sabah

The key hot-button issues in Sabah today are:

## 1. High cost of living

The cost of living in Sabah is the highest in Malaysia arising from the high cost of freight to Sabah and within Sabah. The Warisan State government and PH Federal government has not even started to tackle this issue. Even a packet of cooking oil that is usually priced at RM2 is sold up to RM6 to RM7, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department P. Waytha Moorthy said after making a working visit to Kampung Lompozou, Matunggong in Kudat.

## 2. Unemployment

The unemployment rate in Sabah in 2018 was 5.4%, according to the Sabah Manpower Department. Sabah recorded the highest youth unemployment rate at 13.5% in 2017 compared with 2.9% in Melaka. Jobs are getting scarce in Sabah and youths are leaving the state to seek work. Sabah recorded the highest number of unemployed graduates in 2018 at 27,540, according to the Department of Statistics.

## 3. Low income and high poverty rate

Sabah's Pitas district recorded the lowest median household income of RM2,105 in 2016 compared with the National median of RM5,228 and RM9,073 in KL. The poverty rate in Sabah was 2.9% in 2017 compared to the national average of 0.4%. In 2016, over 50% of Sabah's workers earned less than RM1,240 a month.

## 4. Sabah economy expands but SMEs are closing shop

Although the last economic data available showed 8.2% growth in Sabah in 2017, on the ground, many SMEs as well as retail businesses have closed down because of poor business and shortage of workers. A slump in commodity prices for palm oil and rubber has left many estates operating at a loss since the start of 2019.

## 5. Poor education infrastructure

At least 54.5% of schools in Sabah are classified as dilapidated and require immediate maintenance and repair works, State Education and Innovation Minister Yussof Yacob said. A total of 37 out of 1,296 dilapidated schools have been repaired while 83 schools were undergoing repair by the Public Works Department (JKR).

## 6. Security

After the 2013 invasion by the "Sulu Army" and subsequent military action by the Malaysian armed forces to evict the intruders, Sabah has been on the Travel Alert list of most Western countries. This has impacted tourism as well as foreign investment in Sabah, particularly in the East Coast. Although security has been reinforced and curfew maintained by ESSCOM in the East Coast, kidnapping sailors and fishermen for ransom continues to be reported.

## 7. Undocumented aliens

Undocumented foreigners continues to be the key problem for Sabah due to its porous borders, especially in Kudat, Lahad Datu and Tawau. Part of this problem arise because employers hire undocumented aliens on lower wages, especially at palm oil estates, factories, domestic help and construction labour. Some undocumented aliens rounded up by the authorities were reported to be in possession of fake MyKad IDs leading to renewed calls for Sabah IC to be issued.