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Pas in the political stage and its role in helping with victory and the gabungan rakyat sabah (grs)-barisan nasional (bn) government in east malaysia (borneo)

Nordin Sakke

Geo-Politics and Sabah Electoral (GeoPES)
Faculty of Science Social & Humanities
Sabah Intellect Cultural Researcher Association (IKSAS)

Rahimin Mustafa

Sabah Intellect Cultural Researcher Association (IKSAS)

Ramli Dollah

Geo-Politics and Sabah Electoral (GeoPES)
Faculty of Science Social & Humanities

Eko Prayitno Joko*

Geo-Politics and Sabah Electoral (GeoPES)
Faculty of Science Social & Humanities

Adi Jafar

Geo-Politics and Sabah Electoral (GeoPES)
Faculty of Science Social & Humanities,

***Corresponding author: Eko Prayitno Joko**

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Abstract

PAS has been established in Sabah for more than 3 decades. The establishment of PAS in Sabah is in line with the objective of creating a society that can practice the good values of life through politics, dakwah and education. Involvement in politics is an important agenda for gaining governing power. Therefore, since its establishment, PAS has never skipped to participate in the Sabah State Election. PAS Sabah is very lucky because it has managed to send the first state assemblyman (ADUN) after PRN 2020 through the appointed ADUN. This paper attempts to look at the political journey of PAS in Sabah and its role in the victory of Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) and BN. To explain this objective, content analysis of PRN results reports from 1994 to 2020 was conducted in addition to obtaining

information throughout PRN 2020 through field observations and interviews with informants who are directly involved in PAS. To clarify this objective, a content analysis of the PRN results report from 1994 to 2020 was conducted. Apart from that, information during the PRN 2020 through field observations and interviews with informants who are directly involved in PAS. Findings show that PAS is a party that consistently contests every election even though it has never won. The directive not to contest in PRN 2020 is a big challenge to comply with but this compliance has paid off when the first inaugural ADUN was successfully appointed to contribute expertise in the Sabah DUN. The GRS victory from WARISAN Plus is a partial contribution of the PAS 2018 votes. Among the clear ones are DUN N.08 Pintasan and N.16 Karambunai. The victory of the GRS was also contributed by the involvement of the PAS machinery at all levels, whether the Central machinery or the state machinery in line with the political policy of consensus and unification of the ummah.

Keywords

PAS, Appointed state assemblyman, Consensus Politics, Election

Introduction

Sabah is a unique state, not only because of the racial and cultural custom diversities but also due to the frequent changes in government as a result of political awareness among the residents in Sabah. The administration of Sabah land by political parties clearly started in 1963-1976 when Sabah was governed by the Sabah Alliance Party (a domination of United Sabah National Organisation – USNO) (Sabiha, 2008; Asmady and Suzalie 2014). The conflict between USNO and its successor parties with the federal government led to a change in the ruling party of the Sabah government. In 1976, the Sabah People’s United Party (BERJAYA) succeeded in replacing USNO, similarly in 1985, Sabah was ruled by the Sabah United Party (PBS) until 1994, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in 1994 until 2018 (Hamdan 2020; Nordin et al. 2018). The WARISAN Party on 2018 and the Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) in 2020. The conflict and dissatisfaction of the Sabah people towards the ruling party led to six times’ changes of the government since the formation of Malaysia in 1963.

PAS realised that without the participation of Sabah (and Sarawak), its desire to dominate the politics of the homeland would meet a difficult path. Therefore, the establishment of PAS Sabah or Sabah State PAS Liaison was realised in May 19, 1986 (Mohamad Shauki, Syahrudin, & Nordin, 2018). The expansion of PAS to Sabah is in line with the objective of creating a society that can practice moral life values including in the aspect of politics. PAS joined democratic politics to obtain government power in Malaysia through elections. Hence, it is inevitable and compulsory for PAS as a political party to participate in elections and register as a political party.

However, history shows that even though PAS had good political, preaching and educational goals, it has failed in its efforts to dominate the minds of Sabah

people. If the presence of PAS Sabah and its involvement in elections from 1986 to 2018 are highlighted, it has never won any election seats be it state assembly or parliamentary seats, compared to other parties born from West Malaysia such as DAP, UMNO and PKR (Hamdan 2020). Among the causes of this failure is the problem of political consensus or *tahaluf siyasi*. Before the 2020 Sabah election, PAS Sabah did not have any solid partner in politics whereas the 2013 and 2018 general elections gave a clear signal that politics without friends will invite defeat. This was proven when PAS contested solo without friends in 2018, causing the votes obtained to decline compared to 2013. Due to the awareness from the 2018 State Election, PAS Sabah explored opportunities to form consensus partners to engage in coalition politics. Therefore, this paper tries to look at the history of PAS Sabah's involvement in coalition politics and its contribution to the winning and journey of the GRS and BN government machinery.

Involvement of pas in sabah state election

The involvement of PAS in the elections in Sabah was relatively late, which was during the federal (parliamentary) elections in August 1986 when the 7th General Election (GE) was held. PAS' early involvement in the election is in relation to the burning enthusiasm of its members following the formation of PAS Sabah at that time. This participation was PAS Sabah' first involvement in the electoral democratic process and was the initial 'test' in marketing PAS to the people of Sabah (Mohamad Shauki et al. 2018). The participation of PAS generally only involved constituencies that have a majority of Muslim voters.

Beginning with the parliaments P.136 Kota Belud, P.139 Jambongan (the old name of Beluran Parliament) and P.147 Kimanis, PAS then made an attempt in the Tawau Parliament in the 8th and 9th GEs as well as the parliaments of Kota Belud and Gaya in the 10th GE and parliaments of Kalabakan and Batu Sabah in the 13th GE. Despite many attempts, PAS was still unable to send parliamentarians through these four GEs. The 14th GE in 2018 was seen as the pinnacle of PAS' involvement in the parliamentary elections. This is because in a situation where PAS is alone without a coalition partner in Sabah, it managed to send eight candidates to contest. This amount is the history of PAS in Sabah politics. Among the contested parliaments include the Kota Belud, Tuaran, Putatan, Batu Sapi, Silam, Semporna, Tawau and Kalabakan parliaments. However, the total number of votes obtained was around 1-8% from each parliament (IKSAS, 2019).

On the other hand, at the state election (PRN) level, PAS was seen to have never failed to fuel electoral democracy since it first established a foothold in Sabah as shown in Table 1. Even though PAS started its political competition on the west coast, much focus is given in the State Assembly of the east coast in the context of PRN. PAS was seen to have seriously attempted to produce its first member state assemblyman which began during the 1994 GE. At that time, PAS only targeted the seats in the Tawau district. The three state assembly constituencies include N.43 Merotai, N.44 Sri Tanjung and N.47 Balung. PAS' attempt to produce its first

assemblyman hit a dead end when it candidates lost their deposits in the three constituencies. The PAS candidates only managed to garner less than 1.5% of the votes received by the Election Commission of Malaysia (SPR) – (SPR, 1994).

Similar to the attempt in the 1999 GE, PAS was only satisfied with the average number of total votes obtained in the six state constituencies that were contested at around 2.2% only. It covered N.47 Kalabakan (Sebatik) (3.2 %), N.46 Merotai (3.0 %), N.6 Tempasuk (2.4 %), N.39 Sukau (1.9 %), N.35 Sekong (1.7 %), N.13 Likas (1.2 %) - (Mohamad Shauki et al. 2018). In this election, PAS has started with coalition politics at the central level due to the dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister. PAS Central wisely mobilised the masses by creating the People’s Movement (GERAK) to gain the support of the voters who sympathised with Anwar Ibrahim. In order to face the election, GERAK was replaced by a more powerful coalition politics which is Barisan Alternatif (BA). Barisan Alternatif was formed as a commitment to face the 1999 Malaysian General Election after Anwar Ibrahim was dismissed from the government due to his first sodomy case on September 20, 1998. PAS through BA has successfully formed a consensus with three political parties, namely the People’s Action Party (DAP), the National Justice Party (KeADILan) and Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM). Although the sentiment of Anwar’s dismissal was very significant in changing the voters’ perception towards the ruling party at the time, namely UMNO-BN, this BA sentiment was not successfully mobilised by PAS Sabah. PAS Sabah did not succeed in forming a political alliance with Sabah-born parties such as BERSEKUTU, SETIA and PBS, causing all PAS candidates to lose their deposits in the 1999 State Election.

Table 1. total and percentage of votes obtained by PAS in PRN 1994-2018

DUN	PRN 1994		PRN 1999		PRN 2004		PRN 2008		PRN 2013		PRN 2018	
	JUMLAH UNDI	%	JUMLAH UNDI	%	JUMLAH UNDI	%	JUMLAH UNDI	%	JUMLAH UNDI	%	JUMLAH UNDI	%
Tanjong Kapor											617	3.7
Pitas									976	8.2	262	2.1
Likas			200	1.2								
Tempasuk			239	2.4	426	4.0	4109	36.8	3285	23.1	521	3.4
Kadamaian											129	1.0
Usukan					413	3.8					355	2.1
Karambunai											1696	6.5
Tanjung Aru									5409.0	31.7	1379	7.9
Sungai Sibuga					415	3.7						
Sekong			121	1.7							366	3.1
Karamunting											677	6.0
Kuamut											330	2.4
Sukau			126	1.9	1028	21.8	76	1.6	1432	18.3		
Kunak									1002	11.0	492	4.8
Sulabayan											139	1.5
Bugaya									702	5.9	144	1.0
Balung	79	0.6									428	4.1
Apas											487	3.6
Merotai	164	1.3	373	3.0	1039	13.2	931	10.6	3957	27.9	1209	8.1
Sri Tanjong	197	1.2										
Tanjong Batu									3228	22.5	1506	9.0
Sebatik			293	3.2	452	7.8			1344	17.7	504	9.5

Source: Modified from SPR (1994, 1999, 2004, 2008, 2013, 2018)

Starting with PRN 2004, the understanding between PAS and the People's Justice Party (PKR) managed to continue. PKR is a new party established in 2013 as a result of a merger between KeADILan and PRM. This time, the understanding that started in Peninsular Malaysia can be translated in Sabah where PAS and PKR continued the tradition of no seat clash. As a result of this understanding, PAS Sabah has managed to increase its overall average vote to 9.1% compared to 2.2% in PRN 1999. Among the state assembly seats that received overwhelming support are located on the east coast. Among them are N.48 Sukau (21.8 %), N.58 Merotai (13.2 %), N.60 Sebatik (7.8 %) and N.42 Sungai Sibuga (3.7 %). The west coast assembly seats only managed to garner about 4% of votes among them are N.06 Tempasuk (4.0 %) and N.08 Usukan (3.8 %).

In PRN 2008, the agreement between PAS and PKR continued through a more managed understanding. Based on the experience of PRN Sarawak, PAS Sabah made a decision to contest for a few seats in the hope of getting good results. PAS chose to contest in the N.58 Merotai and N.48 Sukau constituencies. Interestingly, the N.06 Tempasuk state seat was handed over to PKR but the candidate who contested was Ustaz Awang Laiman Haji Ikin, a PAS member who at the time was the Principal of the Tambunan Orphanage. In this election, the percentage of people's support in the N.58 Merotai and N.48 Sukau constituencies experienced a decline of 2.6% and 20.2%, respectively. In contrast, the total percentage in the N.06 Tempasuk constituency increased by 32.8%.

PRN 2013 was said to be the climax of success for PAS following a highly organised agreement after the 2008 GE. The Pakatan Rakyat brand has become an important brand not only in Peninsular Malaysia but also expanded in Sabah. Although PAS Sabah still could not win any seats in PRN 2013, there was a significant increase in the percentage of votes. This was shown by the total average number of votes of 18.5% of the 9 contested state seats. The increase in the total votes was a one-fold increase compared to PRN 2004. From 9 state seats contested, only 3 lost their deposit money. This shows a very proud achievement for PAS members and its leadership in particular and the Pakatan Rakyat coalition in general. Previously, PAS Sabah could only show good performance on the East Coast but in the PRN 2013, it has spread to the West Coast area. This factor is driven by PAS Sabah's wisdom in fielding professionals as candidates. For example, Hamid Bin Ismail, a young lawyer was put to contest in the N.17 - Tanjong Aru state assembly and managed to garner a total of 31.7% votes. The same went to Ahmad Bin Dullah, a person with vast experience in banking (Assistant Manager of Bank Islam Tawau Branch) who was placed to contest in N.58 - Merotai and managed to garner a total of 27.9% votes. Ustaz Awang Laiman Haji Ikin, a businessman with the character of ustaz also managed to garner a total of 23.1% votes in the N.06 Tempasuk state assembly.

In 2018, PAS was removed from Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition, a new coalition that replaced Pakatan Rakyat (PR). Central PAS realised that without a political coalition, there will be definitely problems. Therefore, PAS had formed a

third block known as Gagasan Sejahtera. Gagasan Sejahtera consists of PAS, IKATAN and BERJASA. However, this block failed to spread its wing to Sabah and was coldly greeted by Sabah voters. This caused PAS Sabah to compete with its own strength in the PRN 2018. As a result, PAS Sabah suffered defeat in 18 state seats that were contested with an overall average of around 4.4%. This percentage was lower compared to 2013 and slightly better compared to PRN 1999. If highlighted in PRN 2018, PAS contested in 18 state seats and this number is the largest that has ever been contested by PAS since its conception on the democratic political stage in Sabah. Of this number, four state constituencies garnered votes that were above the overall average votes obtained by the candidates. Among them are the N.44 Karamunting, N.12 Karambunai, N.17 Tanjung Aru, N.58 Merotai and N.59 Tanjung Batu state constituencies as shown in Figure 1. The historical factor of PAS' involvement in the election series, especially in the east coast, was seen to contribute to a relatively good response. For example, N.58 Merotai and N.59 Tanjung Batu. Although the percentage of the votes received was below 11.5 per cent, the total votes received exceeded 1,000. This number showed that PAS has little by little succeeded in socialising itself among the Muslim community on the east coast. Besides that, the factor of urban and semi-urban was also seen as the contributor to the favourable response as the social media connectivity that was relatively good allowed the community to get alternative information. For example, N.12 Karambunai and N.17 Tanjung Aru had succeeded to garner a proud vote. The PAS candidate in the Karambunai state assembly managed to obtain 1,696 votes, equivalent to 6.4 per cent, of the total votes. The same went with N.17 Tanjung Aru that staked a young lawyer who managed to get a total of 1,379 votes, equivalent to 7.9 per cent, of the total number of voters present.

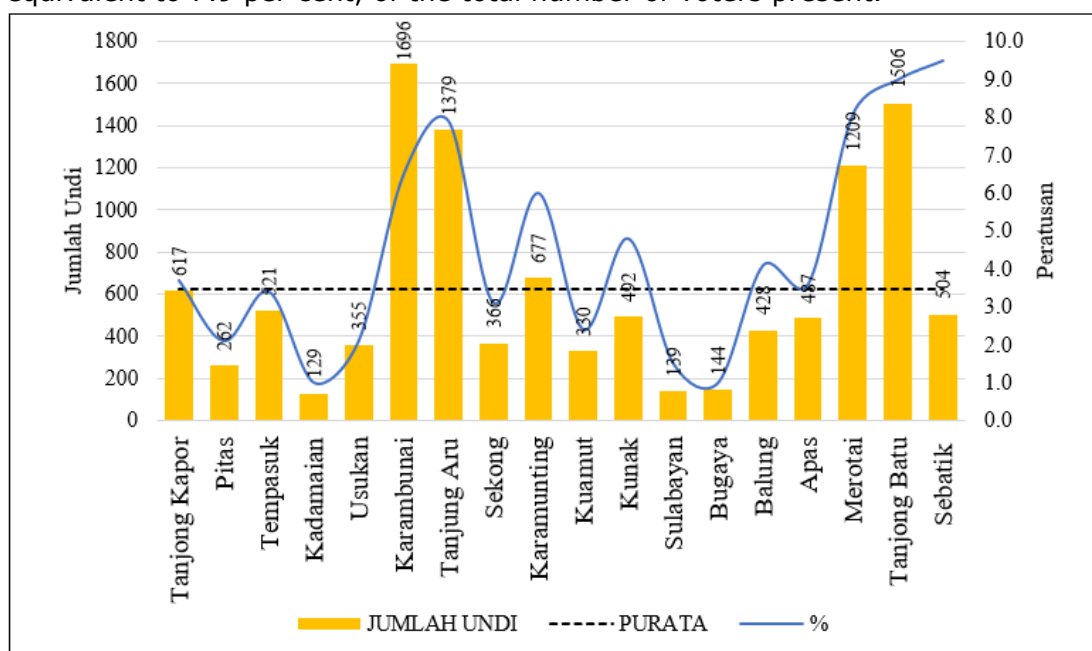


Figure 1: The total and percentage of votes obtained in the 2018 GE
 Source: Modified from SPR (2018)

Based on the narrative of PAS Sabah's defeat in the state election series starting from 1994 to 2018, the total of voters fluctuated according to the election years shown in Figure 2. What can be concluded is that sealed political coalition or alliance is clearly an important factor to increase the total votes of contesting PAS candidates. This is in line with what was stated by Mohammad Agus (1992) who explained that accommodation politics is the best solution in the context of Sabah's political gamble with several political parties sheltered under dominant political parties which dominated the Federal Government, as in the participation of Sabah political parties in BN. For example, before the formation of Pakatan Rakyat (PR), Barisan Alternatif was successfully established to face the 1999 GE. In 1998, a political crisis occurred between Dr. Mahathir serta Anwar. This crisis eventually led to Anwar's dismissal from all positions in the party and government on September 2, 1998. Anwar was then tried and sentenced to imprisonment on abuse of power charges. While in prison, Anwar's wife Datin Seri Wan Azizah binti Wan Ismail established Parti Keadilan Nasional (KeADILan) on April 4, 1999 which later joined PAS and DAP under the Barisan Alternatif (BA) symbol to face the 1999 GE (Hamdan, 2020). Although the idea of forming a BA coalition had spread to Sabah, it was not able to shake the voters' sentiment. This caused the total of votes percentage obtained to be less than 6% in the 1994 and 1999 GEs.

However, in the 2004 and 2008 state elections, PAS' votes increased by more than 6% when the political spirit of Barisan Alternatif consensus could continue and the Pakatan Rakyat coalition could be formed. Parti Keadilan managed to be the mediate between PAS and DAP as the relationship of these two parties were relatively loose. However, based on the goal to defeat UMNO, differences were temporarily put aside as finding common ground was an important agenda. Hence, as the 2008 GE came which was on April 1, 2008, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) was established to mobilise cooperation between PAS, PKR and DAP in an effort to face BN. When the 12th GE took place, PAS had conducted a *tahaluf siyasi* with non-Muslim political parties, especially DAP as well as non-Muslim supporters in PKR (Hamdan, 2020). The political model of the PR coalition had successfully brought a new wave in Sabah politics, especially PAS. The percentage of votes obtained by contesting PAS candidates went up in all places and many constituencies received more than 6% votes. Hamdan (2020) explained that the relaxation of PAS' identity as a result of a *tahaluf siyasi* with political parties of different ideologies in PR resulted in the increase of votes towards PAS candidates. Different from the 2018 election, PAS contested solo by defending its political identity, causing the votes obtained by PAS to decline. This clearly shows that political consensus or *tahaluf siyasi* with other national parties at federal level bring many benefits to PAS who was previously seen to have failed to secure a place in the hearts of Sabahan voters.

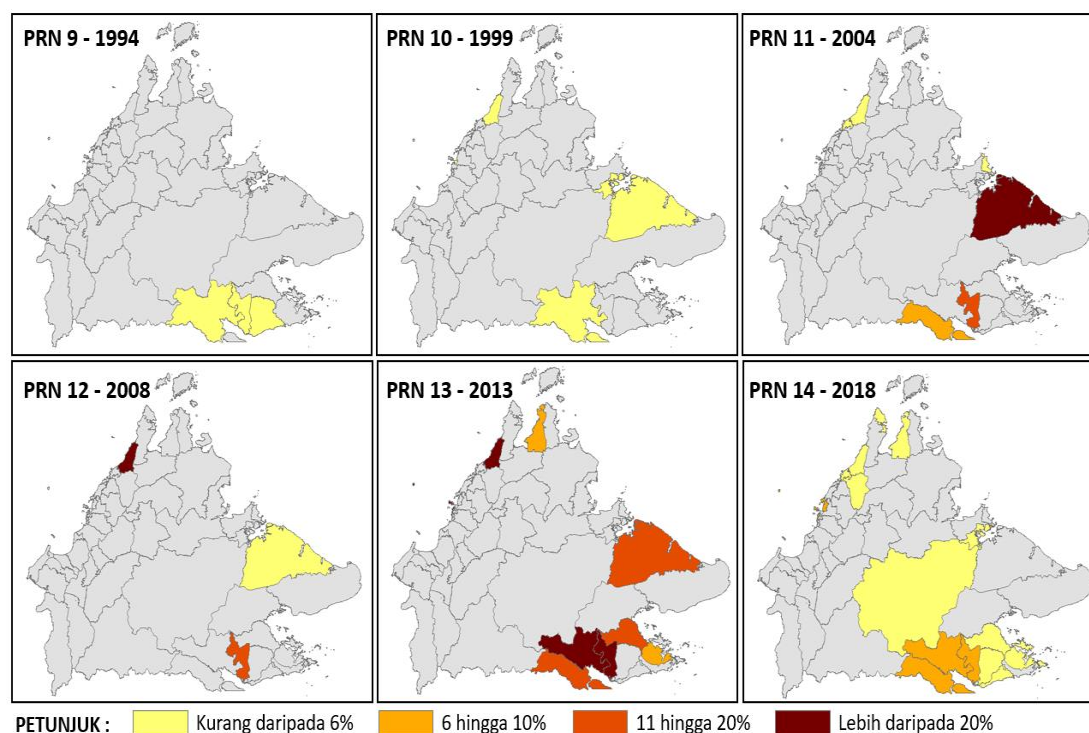


Figure 1. Total of votes (%) according to state seats contested by PAS in state elections from 1994 to 2018.

Pas and its role in the victory and the grs-bn government

Pas' seat determination and consensus politics

PAS participated in the democratic politics to gain governance power in Malaysia through elections (Mohamad Shauki et al. 2018). PAS as a party that has long been established in Sabah does not want to miss out partaking in either the state or parliamentary elections. Hence, in PRN 2020, PAS had intended to contest 10 legislative assembly states as announced by PAS Deputy President Dato' Sri Tuan Ibrahim bin Tuan Man (Awani, 2020) and PAS Secretray-General, YB Datuk Seri Takiyuddin bin Hassan (Berita Harian, 2020). This was because PAS had grassroots machinery in 20 parliamentary constituencies in Sabah. PAS' presence in Sabah with the growth of many PAS-sponsored educational institutions like Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam (PAS) which provides pre-school classes for the locals in addition to the existence of the 'red army' of the Malaysian Charity Department which plays a role in welfare and safety programmes. In some parliamentary constituencies, PAS' election campaign had started earlier before the Sabah State Legislative Assembly was dissolved, especially in the constituencies where PAS intended to field its candidates. Therefore, there unofficial meetings with UMNO and BERSATU regarding Muslim state seats (Aliakbar, 2021). Hence, there were 10 Muslim-majority seats that PAS Sabah was looking at to field. Even though the target was 10 seats as announced through the media, only four seats were consistently pursued by PAS Sabah as the seats were new seats as a result of the

delimitation of State state constituencies. The focus on these new seats were expected to facilitate negotiations as these seats had no incumbents. Among them were N.08 Pintasan, N.17 Darau, N.24 Tanjung Keramat dan N.70 Kukusan.

However, due to the bitter situation caused by the clash of PN+BN against PH Plus WARISAN, the negotiations were a bit difficult with the GRS component which combines Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU), Barisan Nasional (BN), PAS, STAR, Parti Maju Sabah (SAPP), Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs) and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS). Based on the current situation, PN and BN had requested for PAS Sabah to not place any candidate in PRN 2020 based on factors that were not explained. This caused dissatisfaction among PAS supporters. Many among the PAS members and a few PAS Sabah leaders urged the Central PAS leadership to re-evaluate the political cooperation with Muafakat Nasional (MN) and PN. At that time, PAS Sabah insisted that despite what happened, they would still place a candidate to implement the master plan of PAS Sabah to send 'the eldest child' to the Sabah State Assembly. N.24 Tanjung Keramat was chosen as a backup seat and all the machinery in the West Coast were deployed for duty in this DUN (Aliakbar, 2021).

However, at the federal level, PAS Central and PN as well as MN had discussed and made a final decision to agree that PAS Sabah should not place a candidate. PAS Central took a stand to give way to friends in PN and Muafakat Nasional in the PRN Sabah. Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, the president of PAS, explained that the step was taken in order to preserve the consensus that had been forged in addition to taking into account the political implications in the future (Sinar Harian, 2020). This decision was a series of PAS Summit discussions held on 13 September 2020 which unanimously agreed to this move. It did not mean that PAS would 'retire' from Sabah politics, rather but it was only temporary. The step taken by PAS was solely to fulfil the wish of all opposition parties to avoid a three-cornered competition that could benefit the parties that were at odds with PN-BN in PRN Sabah 2020. PAS held onto what had been agreed upon which was to avoid clashes between friends thus giving space to the opposition achieve victory. This decision was also taken after PAS held a heart-to-heart discussion on the concept of opposition solidarity between all parties in Sabah, namely Barisan Nasional, Bersatu, STAR, PBS dan SAPP (PAS, 2020b).

To explain the decision not to contest, PAS Deputy President, Dato' Sri Tuan Ibrahim bin Tuan Man who was also the Minister of Environment and Water (KASA) had to go to Sabah to appease Sabah PAS members. A meeting called an election briefing was held at the Ria Hotel (Tabung Haji) on 11 September 2020. Through the briefing, PAS members who are known for their wala' nature to the leadership were successfully calmed down and agreed to the instructions and decisions of the Central PAS. The compliance of PAS Sabah members and leadership not to field a candidate was accepted with open arms in order to preserve future political consensus. The PAS Sabah election machinery at all levels acquiesced to the results because they looked at the bigger agenda and did not get caught up in the agenda

of PAS' rival parties so that PAS would remain in the competition. This can bring division, and the opponent would easily achieve victory. This decision was to avoid a split which would cause PAS to lose the opportunity to achieve victory (Harakahdaily, 2020). On the basis of consensus politics, the distribution of contested seats was successfully done without boycotts and challenges among state PAS members and leaders.

PAS' involvement and machinery mobilisation

PRN 2020 has recorded a new history when 447 candidates from 16 parties contested, while Bengkoka saw the most contestors involving 11 corners. There were seven contesting party blocs, namely WARISAN Plus, BN, PN, PBS, PCS, USNO and LDP. In the meantime, a grand coalition known as Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) comprising three coalition parties – PN Sabah, BN Sabah and PBS – was formed on the nomination day by Tan Sri Muhyiddin. This action was believed to overcome the risk of split votes due to failure to reach an understanding in a one-on-one contest involving at least three corners of fellow political partners of PN, BN and PBS in 17 DUN seats. The formation of GRS could reunite the warring groups as one team to face WARISAN Plus, PCS, USNO and other parties (Mohd Rahimin 2021). PAS took a stand to merge with GRS and decided to not contest in order to preserve the consensus that had been forged aside from taking into account the future political implications. Although not contesting, PAS Sabah's directives based on the Central Sabah document would still mobilise its Election Machinery to ensure that all PAS voters go out to cast their votes towards Perikatan Nasional and Barisan Nasional candidates (PAS, 2020).

PAS' decision to not send a candidate in PRN 2020 was a gap in the history of PAS' involvement in the previous election series. The periods of mourning and feelings of sadness mixed with disappointment were clearly pictured in several areas. Through an observation during PRN 2020 (Nordin, Eko Prayitno & Ramli, 2020), the involvement of PAS machinery in aiding PN and BN machinery was quite slow although the Central PAS' directive letter asking to help contesting political friends of PAS was distributed earlier. In the directive, PAS Sabah assisted by Central PAS would still continue to operate its Election Machinery in a 'not contesting' capacity to ensure all PAS voters go out to vote to support Perikatan Nasional and Barisan Nasional candidates to win the competition (PAS, 2020b). The involvement of PAS machinery was relatively layer as they were sort of sidelined from the works of contesting parties at the initial stage. Realising the situation, PAS Sabah reiterated the order that PAS machinery in contesting constituencies needed to be moved immediately according to their respective capacities. On the basis of friendship, the whole machinery had involved in helping either directly or indirectly (Aliakbar, 2021).

PAS Kunak was one of the most advanced in cooperation and machinery mobilisation. This is because PAS Kunak was directly involved in the contesting party machinery when former DUN Kunak PAS candidate was appointed as the Candidate

Representative for Halid Bin Harun who was the BN (UMNO) candidate contesting in N.63 Kunak. PAS members were appointed as officers that managed the campaign as well as the polling and counting agents. This statement was agreed by Kasman Karate:

“PAS Kunak was given the space to be the candidate representative. The second person after the candidate. The campaign was fully mobilised to 8 PDMs starting from the flag installation to being the vote-grabbers at the polling station. PAS Kunak also mobilised technical units such as election knowledge aid especially PACA management with BN machinery. It was also given the space to brief the polling and counting journey to all officers. I led the machinery and became the coordinator of DUN Kunak. Also joining together was YDP PAS Silam (Ramli Pataruddin).

The head of PAS Muslimat in Silam Ms. Jumrah helped with the PACA briefing. PAS Muslimat was given the space to manage and administer at the BN Kunak Command Centre office specifically regarding the law and related to campaigns involving campaign permits.”

(Kasman Karate, 2021)

Machinery cooperation also took place in other areas where PAS has Area (Parliament) Committees and branches. PAS has grassroots machinery in almost all of the 20 parliaments in Sabah (Aliakbar, 2021). Hence, all grassroots machinery had been mobilised, especially in the areas where PAS Sabah had contested in PRN 2018. Among them were DUN N.03 Pitas, N.04 Tanjung Kapor, N.09 Tempasuk, N.10 Usukan, N.11 Kadamaian, N.16 Karambunai, N.17 Darau, N.22 Tanjung Aru, N.24 Tanjung Keramat, N.53 Sekong, N.54 Karamunting, N.57 Kuamut, N.64 Sulabayan, N.66 Bugaya, N.67 Balung, N.68 Apas, N.70 Kukusan, N.71 Tanjung Batu, N.72 Merotai, N.73 Sebatik and several other constituencies (Nordin, Eko Prayitno & Ramli, 2020). PAS machinery was involved by driving the campaigns from house to house, posters and flags installation, and as security personnel led by the respective area's Charity Department.

PAS Putatan was among those who made early preparation after realising the rather unstable political position of the state and federal at that time. This is because the Putatan Parliament and Dun N.17 Tanjung Aru were areas that had been contested in the 2018 election. Furthermore, the new DUN that became the target of contesting in PRN 2020 is located in the Putatan parliament. Therefore, the machinery was mobilised and the building of relations between PAS, UMNO and BERSATU in Putatan based on the concept of ummah unity has been established. This allowed the three parties to move as one team. Although UMNO-BN was the one who succeeded in placing a candidate in N.24 Tanjung Keramat, in the name of ummah unity, the three parties were present during the launching of the machinery and movement room of BERSATU DUN N.24 Tanjung Keramat. To further strengthen the relationship, Malaysia UMNO Youth Chief, Dr. Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki together with the candidate of UMNO-BN DUN N.24 Tanjung Keramat, Ir. Shahelmey Yahya had a meeting with the leadership and machinery of PAS Putatan and the headquarters of PAS DUN Tanjung Keramat. The PAS Putatan machinery

was divided into three main teams in DUN N.22 Tanjung Aru, N.23 Petagas and N.24 Tanjung Keramat. The PAS machinery moved with the candidate everyday, became the speaker in group talks and organised programme that involved local voters (Muhammad Akmal Othman, 2021).

For state constituencies in the Kota Belud parliament, PAS also cooperated by mobilising their election machinery although they did not succeed in fielding a candidate in DUN N.08 Pintasan. For the candidate of BERSATU in N.08 Pintasan, it can be said that Mr Fairuz Renddan met with the Yang Dipertua PAS Kota Belud, Ustaz Awang Laiman Haji Ikin almost everyday. The role of Ustaz Awang Laiman Haji Ikin was seen as crucial because he was candidate in DUN Tempasuk in the 2008, 2013 and 2018 General Election in the Kota Belud parliamentary and obtained a significant vote of 4,109 (2008) and 3,285 (2013). The same went with the state constituencies of the Tuaran parliament where PAS focused on helping the UMNO-BN candidate in DUN Pantai Dalit and BERSATU candidate in Sulaman. PAS Sabah Commissioner, Mohd Aminuddin Aling had campaigned for Datuk Seri Panglima Hajiji Haji Noor in N.12 Sulaman. Tuaran Youth Chief cum Deputy Youth Chief of PAS Sabah also mobilised house-to-house campaign activities. He was entrusted as a speaker for group meetings to ensure the victory of N.12 Sulaman candidate who is currently the Sabah Chief Minister (Salman Amin, 2021).

Aside from the state machinery, the central PAS had also come to help in line with the letter of instruction to aid the Sabah PN machinery. At the initial stage, almost all the top PAS leaders from the Central and State starting from the President, Vice President to the committee at the state level from Peninsular Malaysia came to give support. However, as a result of the Covid-19 spread, it somewhat hindered Central PAS assistance to the GRS machinery at the end of the campaigns (Aliakbar, 202). PAS Deputy President, Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man only managed to go to N.16 Karambunai and N.24 Tanjung Keramat to help the UMNO candidates. The Muafakat Nasional Coordination of N.24 Tanjung Keramat was also attended by the DUN candidate, Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki (Malaysian UMNO Youth Movement Leader), Datuk Mohd Nizar Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak (Pekan UMNO Youth Leader) and PAS Deputy President (Muhammad Akmal, 202). Likewise, Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Samsuri bin Mokhtar who is PAS Vice President and Terengganu Chief Minister also helped the BERSATU candidate in DUN N.12 Sulaman and the UMNO-BN candidate in N.13 Pantai Dalit (Salman Amin, 2021).

The involvement of PAS Sabah machinery had actually happened before. On the basis of Muafakat Nasional (MN) and the ummah unity, Sabah PAS community had already mobilised the machinery to help UMNO win in the P. 176 Kimanis by-election (PRK) held on 18 January 2020. Sabah PAS Liaison Body Secretary, Dr Aliakbar Gulasan who was a lecturer in UMS at the time had to take leaves to ensure the "Muafakat Nasional" candidate in Sabah wins the election. In this PRK, PAS Sabah was entrusted with the custody of two voting districts (DM), namely DM Pimping and DM Brunei (Nordin, 2019). Likewise, with the P.186 Sandakan parliamentary by-election, the PAS Sabah machinery was also mobilised even

though the one competing to represent the opposition at that time was from Parti Bersatu Sabah, a party that is said to be very opposed to PAS' ideology. However, the machinery was set in motion based on a letter of instruction from the secretary general of PAS, YB Takkiyudin dated 28 April 2019, who gave strong support to the PBS candidate, Ms Linda Tsen to strengthen the Opposition Bloc so that it could be a check and balance in parliament (PAS, 2019).

Vote Contribution of PAS Members and Supporters in PRN 2020

In this PRN 2020, PAS' contribution in saving several GRS candidates was very interesting to observe. As informed, PAS had contested solo in PRN/PRU 2018. In the competitions, it really tested PAS' identity which was said to have failed to secure a place in Sabah. Although PAS did not win a single seat to be sent to DUN Sabah in PRN 2018, the total of 11,241 votes garnered shows that PAS Sabah has its own supporters (Table 2). By assuming this total of votes as supporters and staunch voters of PAS in PRN 2020, it is seen that PAS Sabah played a role in either increasing the total votes of GRS component or ensuring that the total votes obtained by WARISAN Plus candidates decreases. In the context of the retention of GRS component's victory, it can be observed in N.10 Usukan, N.67 Balung, N.68 Apas and N.71 Tanjung Batu. PAS' votes that were obtained in 2018 had contributed between 11 – 100% to the increase in the total majority vote obtained by the candidates of GRS component in PRN 2020. Aside from increasing the total of votes, the total of votes for PAS in 2018 also caused the decline of majority votes for WARISAN candidates by between 7.8 – 100%.

Table 2: Total PAS Votes in 2018 and its contribution to GRS candidates

DUN	UNDI PAS 2018	MAJORITI 2018	PEMENANG PRN 2018	MAJORITI 2020	PEMENANG PRN 2020	BEZA MAJORITI 2018-2020	% SUMBANGAN UNDI PAS
N.04 Tanjung Kapor	617	2992	WARISAN	1,879	WARISAN	-1,113	55.4
N.10 Usukan	355	1225	BN-UMNO	4,298	BN-UMNO	3,073	11.6
N.53 Sekong	366	2035	WARISAN	1,599	WARISAN	-436	83.9
N.64 Sulabayan	139	4926	WARISAN	3,245	WARISAN	-1,681	8.3
N.66 Bugaya	144	7851	WARISAN	6,005	WARISAN	-1,846	7.8
N.67 Balung	428	174	BN-UMNO	580	BN-UMNO	406	105.4
N.68 Apas	487	1787	BN-UMNO	2,049	BERSATU	262	185.9
N.16 Karambunai	1696	5366	WARISAN	16	BN-UMNO	-5,350	31.7
N.22 Tanjung Aru	1379	4610	WARISAN	3,147	WARISAN	-1,463	94.3
N.54 Karamunting	677	3848	WARISAN	2,479	WARISAN	-1,369	49.5
N.72 Merotai	1209	2150	WARISAN	1,587	WARISAN	-563	214.7
N.71 Tanjung Batu	1506	1986	BN-UMNO	2,123	BN-UMNO	137	1099.3

Source: Modified from SPR (2018, 2020)

DUN N.16 Karambunai is an example of interesting case where the contribution of PAS votes helped the winning of UMNO candidate. In PRN 2018, the PAS candidate through Tuan Aspar Akbar had obtained a relatively large number of votes which is 1,696 votes. If compared with the total of UMNO-BN majority in 2020, which is 16 votes, it shows that the contribution of PAS votes in 2018 to the victory of GRS component is very significant. It's just that in the context of PRN 2020, N.16 Karambunai is a state seat that had been re-demarcated. Only for voting districts (DM) as in the PRN 2010 delimitation were maintained while two DM from DUN N.13 Inanam another DM from N.17 Tanjung Aru were included in the new Karambunai State Seat as shown in Table 3. The contribution of 2018 PAS votes was said to be among the contributors to the victory where an increase in votes for UMNO-BN occurred for DM Karambunai (86 votes), DM Gudon (284 votes), and DM Indah Permai (123 votes). Without the support of PAS votes in this voting district, DUN N.16 Karambunai would surely still remain under WARISAN because the majority obtained was very thin which is 16 votes only.

The same went to DUN N.08 Pintasan which is located in the Kota Belud parliament. N.08 Pintasan is a new DUN as a result of the re-demarcation of DUN N.06 Tempasuk and N.08 Usukan. A total of eight districts were voting from N.06 Tempasuk and two from N.08 Usukan combined as shown in Table 4. When counted from the votes in PRN 2018, the total votes obtained from the involved voting districts was 349 votes. This total of votes was garnered by Ustaz Mustaqim Bin Aling in N.06 Tempasuk and Mr Adzmin Bin Awang. In the context of N.08 Pintasan, PAS voters were divided because the contesting candidate was running against GRS candidate which was Datu Pandikar Amin Bin Mulia from USNO.

Table 3: Total Votes of PAS, BN and WARISAN for PRN 2018 and PRN 2020 in N.16 Karambunai.

DAERAH MENGUNDI	PRN 2018		PRN2020		
	PAS	BN	BN	WARISAN	BEZA
1. KARAMBUNAI [#]	76	528	614	407	207
2. GUDON [#]	106	764	1048	525	523
3. TAMAN INDAH PERMAI [#]	157	1065	1188	1358	-170
4. KIBAGU [#]	47	576	434	1174	-740
5. TELIPOK LAUT*	-	437	408	215	193
6. TELIPOK DARAT*	-	943	732	1136	-404
7. PULAU SEPANGGAR ⁺	5	71	63	53	10
POS	43	133	21	29	-8
UNDI AWAL	669	739	672	267	405
JUMLAH	1103	5256	5180	5164	16

Note: PRN 2018: [#]DM N.12 Karambunai, ^{*}DM N.13 Inanam dan ⁺DM N.17 Tanjung Aru
 Source: Modified from SPR (2018, 2020)

PAS Kota Belud was rather confused as a source mentioned that PAS was giving its support to USNO candidate, Pandikar Amin Mulia following his role in giving way to Marang Member of Parliament Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang to submit a private motion (RUU 355) on 25 May 2016. The confusion caused PAS votes to split. PAS Deputy President Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man's instruction in the mandate at the PAS Sabah election machinery meeting in Kota Kinabalu for PAS votes to choose GRS candidate was not fully digested by 2018 PAS voters. However, PAS machinery had to campaign through the small communities WhatsApp medium to explain the obligation to vote for GRS candidate during the last days before the polling day. Hence, PAS votes had become part of the majority votes in DM Dudar, Timbang and DM Kota Peladok which also lessened the vote majority of other voting districts. The result was BERSATU candidate Mr Fairuz Renddan won with a slim majority of 84 votes. As a result of this victory, Mr Fairuz Renddan went directly to meet YDP PAS Kota Belud as a sign of gratitude. This is because he realised that the role of PAS was very important in the victory of BERSATU in N.08 Pintasan (Mustaqim Aling, 2021).

Table 4: Total Votes of PAS, BN, PN and USNO for PRN 2018 and PRN 2020 in N.08 Pintasan

DAERAH MENGUNDI	PRN 2018		PRN2020		
	PAS	BN	BERSATU	USNO	BEZA
1. DUDAR #	6	447	493	195	298
2. RAMPAYAN#	79	726	143	747	-604
3. TIMBANG#	21	476	588	85	503
4. TAMAU#	116	460	235	463	-228
5. MERBAU#	34	253	139	210	-71
6. PANDASAN#	8	463	393	168	225
7. KOTA PELADOK#	17	200	221	119	102
8. RAMPAYAN ULU#	12	153	58	116	-58
9. PULAU MANTANANI*	3	207	86	123	-37
10. PELADOK*	47	563	325	384	-59
UNDI POS	6	175	63	50	13
JUMLAH	349	4123	2744	2660	84

Note: PRN2018: #DM N.06 Tempasuk and *DM N.08 Usukan

Source: Modified from SPR (2018, 2020)

Contribution of PAS Members in the GRS-BN Government

The appointment of YB Dr Aliakbar Gulasan from PAS Sabah as one of the six elected assemblymen is a history in Malaysian politics. This appointment is as the commitment of PN and BN that respects PAS Sabah's stance to not contest in PRN 2020. Although the appointment received some objections from Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) and Parti Solidariti Tanah Airku Rakyat Sabah (STAR) at the initial

stage, but in the spirit of cooperation, both of the presidents have agreed to give space based on the capacity that YB Dr Aliakbar Gulasan is Sabah native who is a former lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. This agreement is to focus on the main task of the GRS Government at that time to re-establish the people's confidence in an effort to restore the situation, including managing the re-infection of the Covid-19 pandemic and to rehabilitate the economy and people's social life. Therefore, YB. Dr Aliakbar Gulasan officially became the inaugural PAS assemblyman after he took the oath on 8 October 2020 in front of the Sabah Head of State, Tun Juhar Mahiruddin (Berita Harian Online. 2020). This appointment is an important success in the initial acceptance of the people of Sabah, especially by party leaders who all these while had a hard time accepting PAS due to untrue perceptions that have been firmly embedded in their thinking. This appointment was also an important opportunity for the inaugural assemblyman to clarify the matters that were sceptical to the GRS associates in particular and other fellow assemblymen in general.

Starting from this appointment, several individuals have been appointed either as GLC board members or as councillors in the local authority (PBT). Among them is PAS Sabah Youth Chief, Mr Zulzaim Hilme Abidin who is also a former candidate for the Putatan parliament in 2018 who was appointed as a board member of Desa Group of Companies. Likewise, Ustaz Muhammad Akmal Othman who is the YDP PAS Putatan had been appointed to lead the Malaysian Islam Dakwah Foundation (YADIM) Sabah branch. Other than appointments in GLCs and agencies, several PAS figures had also been appointed as PBT council members. Among them are DUN Sekong PAS candidate who is also PAS Sabah Deputy Commissioner, Mr Sahar Abdul Majid in the Sandakan Municipal Council, Mr Kasman Karate who was a PAS Kunak Candidate, in the Kunak District Council, and Sabah PAS Head of Information and former candidate of DUN Merotai, Hj Ahmad Dullah in the Tawau Municipal Council together with Mr Usman Madeaming, a PAS candidate in DUN Tanjong Batu.

Although the PAS inaugural assemblyman was not given any specific portfolio, the duties of the elected assemblyman are similar to the duties of other assemblyman as stipulated in the rules of appointed assemblymen. This appointment is a complement to the component parties that are members of GRS. The main task of the PAS inaugural assemblyman is to carry out the trust representing the Islamic party in Malaysia and strengthen the cooperation among component parties. The perception of extremists and the label that PAS is not suitable in Sabah that had been embedded for more than 3 decades among the majority of Sabah people including the majority of GRS leaderships was a big challenge. The important task is to convince the component parties that PAS is capable of doing a much better job than the perception that PAS is only suitable in mosques and surau. Without waiting long, YB Dr Aliakbar Gulasan implemented his works with the tag #JomLawanKerja #JanganTungguLama. Many programmes have been planned and organised to clear the community's perception to ensure

PAS stays relevant and accepted. Just look at the daily routine reports of this inaugural assemblyman through his Facebook. Every day, there will be programmes done to approach the community. Among them are touring the districts in Sabah, empowering the relationships with NGO either by distributing food basket to affected communities or discussions of cooperation. Aside from the aid agenda and reaching out to the Muslim community, he also makes sure to strengthen the relationships with the non-Muslims. Herman Obi's appointment as the Inter-Racial Relations Officer shows that this PAS inaugural assemblyman is serious about establishing cooperation with the non-Muslim community. This is one of the approaches to erode the extreme perception of PAS towards other religions in Malaysia.

At the initial stage of being appointed as an assemblyman, he had toured Sabah twice in October and November 2021. This tour was the result of collaboration with NGOs, government agencies and 20 active PAS entities in the area. This effort was in line with Sabah Maju Jaya's encouragement and policy to strengthen relationships with other bodies. In a situation where the community needs help in the pandemic era, many dry food baskets had been distributed through the Sabah tour in the early series and subsequent series. Food basket assistance from the state government allocations as well as assistance from federal agencies has been coordinated through NGOs and PAS entities that are in each parliament. Among the NGOs that are heavily involved and have cooperated in this aid mission are Sabah Relief, Yayasan Amal Malaysia Sabah branch (YAMCS), Sabah Muslim Volunteers Graduate Association, Sabah Service Organisation, Kelantan Children's Association Perantauan Malaysia (PERAKAN), Sabah Women's Paradigm Organisation (AWAS) and several other NGOs. This aid coordination effort could help the GRS government in ensuring that aid can be delivered in areas that are not normally reached by other GRS aid agencies. This is because before joining the GRS government, PAS had been doing aid activities for a long time, especially during the incoming month of Ramadhan. Armed with this experience, it has given an advantage in the matter of welfare aid distribution and reaching out to communities in distress. In addition to NGO channels and PAS entities, aid could also be channeled through government agencies such as the Malaysian Cocoa Board (LKM). For example, 119 cocoa farmers in Tenom, Sook and Keningau who were affected by the floods have received flood aid donated by LKM (Utusan Borneo, 2021), in addition to through religious agencies under the Prime Minister's Department (JPM) such as the Malaysian Islamic Dakwah Foundation (YADIM). These efforts have strengthened the relationship between NGOs and the federal and state governments.

Aside from community service programme, relationships between the parties in GRS are also on the agenda to strengthen unification. Eventhough there were many criticisms against the PAS assemblyman in the initial stage either from the internal parties or external parties of GRS, the message of harmony is more prioritised. Continuing the unification agenda and avoiding greater division was

digested by the inaugural PAS assemblyman by ignoring unconstructive criticisms. The concept of adding friends and reducing enemies is a rule of thumb in governing with the GRS component parties. A lot of focus is directed towards equality, especially regarding justification and ummah unification. This is in line with matured politics as initiated by Central PAS. For the strengthening of development agenda in Sabah in line with the Sabah Maju Jaya agenda, many views have been given for the betterment of the community. In the state assembly, there are many matters relating to religions and non-religions. Among them are the handling policy of non-revenue water (NRW) which is a problem in Sabah, issues and handling approaches of squatters, as well as Muslim houses of worship in recreational and new residential areas.

From the point of view of agriculture, which is also an important agenda in Sabah Maju Jaya, cocoa is a commodity that is trying to be reinvigorated. As the chairman of the Malaysian Cocoa Board (LKM), the effort to raise the image of Sabah as a cocoa producer as it happened in the 1960s and 70s will try to be translated. The big challenge faced is that many cocoa farmers change their crops to palm oil or other commodity crops such as durian. Therefore, programmes to popularise cocoa were held by encouraging cultivation in integration with other crops. This is because cocoa can contribute to the country's commodity income. Many downstream products will be revealed to cocoa farmers other than chocolate. Among them, there are so far a total of 63 potential downstream products in the cosmetic and medical product category. By revealing these downstream products, it is expected that cocoa growers will be more confident in surviving their cocoa plantations, in addition to empowering research to continue the search for downstream products to help cocoa growers secure the cocoa market in Sabah.

Conclusion

PAS' involvement in democratic politics in Sabah went through a tortuous path. After more than 3 decades of PAS' existence in Sabah, the work done either through political approaches, preaching and education has been successful with the existence of consensus politics founded at the national level. PAS Sabah's wish to send its first assemblyman to the state assembly was finally achieved through a consensus agenda among political parties in the GRS. The presence of PAS as one of the members of the GRS government has covered the bad perception of PAS. Although there were objections at the initial stage, but because the candidate featured is a native of Sabah who has charismatic leadership, PAS Sabah's ambition to contribute as part of the ruling government was fulfilled. This success is a string of lessons learned from the results of the last election where without consensus politics with the main parties, it is quite difficult to be with the government to carry out the mission of unifying the ummah. The inclusion of PAS in the government is the biggest success in breaking down the dividing wall that hinders PAS together with the community. The collapse of this wall caused PAS to begin being accepted and gain a place in the hearts of the people of Sabah.

Therefore, the role of the inaugural assemblyman is very important to correct the mischievous perception of some of the GRS component party leaders. PAS' inaugural assemblyman must prove that what some of their friends perceive is not true. This perception depends on the success of PAS Sabah in interacting and accommodating various religions and cultures. The political principles of PAS which are illustrated by religious identity politics need to be understood by GRS friends. Similarly, all PAS agents who are appointed either in the GLC or in the PBT council must show charismatic leadership, present thoughtful ideas and actions that are capable of solving community problems and capable of developing Islamic identity politics within the framework of Fiqh As-Sabahi. In order to ensure that PAS continues to be accepted and relevant, the empowerment of the ummah unification with UMNO and BERSATU that has been pioneered by PAS must continue to be maintained. Maintaining the unification of this ummah will be expected to ensure that PAS continues to be relevant in Sabah politics which is able to facilitate preaching, education and welfare work.

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