

Chinese-majority seats no longer a foregone conclusion: Analyst

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Political analyst Datuk Prof Dr Lee Kuok Tiung [Sarawak business directory](#)

KUCHING: Sarawak’s Chinese-majority seats may no longer be assured opposition strongholds as support for GPS’s development agenda and the “Sarawak First” sentiment gather momentum ahead of the state election.

Political analyst Datuk Prof Dr Lee Kuok Tiung believes Chinese voters who have traditionally backed the opposition are increasingly reassessing their political preferences in light of the Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) government’s track record.

“I believe that those who have supported the opposition before are in a dilemma now with the performance of GPS which is showing results,” said Lee, an associate professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

He pointed to the state’s education initiatives as one example of policy success that has struck a chord with voters.

“I give the example of Sarawakians sending their children back to Sarawak to study at the state-owned universities. That is an example of the success of Sarawak’s education policy,” he said.

Lee said the strengthening of the “Sarawak First” narrative could also influence voting behaviour, particularly among Chinese voters who have traditionally favoured national opposition parties.

“With the rise of “Sarawak First” sentiment, it is not impossible that many will prefer local parties this time,” he observed.

He cautioned against assuming that voting patterns in Malaya would necessarily be replicated in Sarawak.

“We cannot copy and paste the political model in Semenanjung into Sarawak,” he said.

Lee noted that while the Democratic Action Party (DAP) continued to retain influence in many Chinese-majority urban constituencies in Johor and Negeri Sembilan, Sabah presented a contrasting example where Chinese voters have increasingly shifted their support towards local-based political parties.

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“The Johor and Negeri Sembilan state elections saw DAP still controlling the Chinese-majority urban seats, but if we look at Sabah, Chinese voters have shifted to local parties,” he added.

His assessment suggests that Sarawak’s unique political environment, where state rights, autonomy and local identity have become increasingly prominent, could produce electoral outcomes that differ from those seen elsewhere in Malaysia.

In the 2021 Sarawak state election, GPS secured a landslide victory by winning 76 of the then 82 seats, while DAP was reduced to just two seats — Padungan and Pending — after losing several long-held urban constituencies.

Although DAP retained its core Chinese-majority strongholds, the election demonstrated GPS’s growing ability to make inroads into urban and mixed constituencies through its development agenda and emphasis on greater state autonomy.

Historically, DAP has dominated many Chinese-majority seats in Kuching, Sibu and Miri, capitalising on strong urban support.

However, analysts have noted that GPS, particularly through the Sarawak United People’s Party (SUPP), has steadily worked to rebuild its support among Chinese voters by highlighting the state’s economic achievements, education initiatives, infrastructure development and efforts to safeguard Sarawak’s rights under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63).

Recent political developments elsewhere have also highlighted shifting voter dynamics.

In Johor’s 2026 state election, Pakatan Harapan, including DAP, lost ground as Barisan Nasional expanded its majority, although DAP continued to retain several Chinese-majority constituencies.

In Negeri Sembilan, DAP also remained competitive in its traditional urban bases despite losses in several mixed seats.

Lee believes Sarawak’s political trajectory may increasingly resemble Sabah’s rather than Malaya’s, with local identity becoming a stronger factor than traditional party loyalties.