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DAP’s declared seat target highly improbable, says analyst

New Sarawak Tribune, Malaysia



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**KUCHING:** Sarawak DAP’s ambition to expand its legislative presence is realistic in principle but securing eight to 10 seats remains a steep electoral challenge. Political analyst Datuk Dr Lee Kuok Tiung said the party’s message clearly indicated its intention was to increase its presence in the State Legislative Assembly to provide more effective scrutiny of the ruling Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS).

“DAP is not saying it wants to take over the government. It is asking voters to return a larger opposition team to strengthen institutional checks and balances,” he said.

However, the associate professor from Universiti Malaysia Sabah’s Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, cautioned that DAP’s electoral base remained largely confined to urban and

Chinese-majority constituencies, particularly in Kuching, Stampin, Sibü and Miri.

He noted that educated urban voters had traditionally supported the idea of institutional accountability but many might also feel disappointed following DAP’s strong performance in the 2022 General Election, citing bread-and-butter concerns and reforms perceived to have increased living costs.

Lee said the 2021 Sarawak election demonstrated the party’s current limitations, with DAP winning only two of the state’s 82 seats — Padungan and Pending.

Following Parti Sarawak Bersatu’s (PSB) alignment with the government through Progressive Democratic (PDB), DAP became the only opposition party represented in the state legislature.

At the same time, he pointed out

that other local opposition parties, including Parti Bumi Kenyalang (PBK), managed to attract notable voter support and avoided losing deposits in several constituencies despite failing to win seats.

On DAP’s declared target of capturing eight to 10 seats, Lee described the upper range as highly improbable.

“A modest recovery to four to six seats is more likely, especially if GPS experiences internal bleeding or sabotage in certain constituencies,” he said.

He added that achieving eight to 10 seats would require DAP not only to retain Padungan and Pending, but also sweep key urban seats in Sibü — Pelawan, Bukit Assek and Dudong — as well as Miri’s Piasau, Pujut and Senadin, while reclaiming suburban constituencies such as Kota Sentosa

and Batu Kawah.

Lee attributed GPS’ resilience to Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg’s success in consolidating Chinese support through Sarawak’s increasingly assertive state-nationalist agenda, including MA63 rights, State Sales Tax revenue from oil and gas, education and healthcare autonomy, and the broader “Sarawak First” narrative.

“Without a strong anti-establishment wave, it will be difficult for DAP to overcome GPS’ incumbency advantage in infrastructure development, welfare delivery and regional pride,” he said.

He added that GPS continued to benefit from portraying itself as a local Sarawak party while DAP still faced the persistent perception of being directed by leadership based in Peninsular Malaysia.



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### SUMMARIES

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