

# PERSPECTIVE

RESEARCHERS AT ISEAS – YUSOF ISHAK INSTITUTE ANALYSE CURRENT EVENTS

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## Malaysia's Democratic Action Party (DAP): Background and Inner Workings

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Long regarded as the opposition grouping *par excellence*, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) is now an important player in the forming of governments in Malaysia. In this picture, Malaysia's former finance minister Lim Guan Eng (R) poses with his father and veteran opposition leader Lim Kit Siang as they meet the media in Penang on 10 August 2020. Picture: GOH Chai Hin, AFP.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Long regarded as the opposition grouping *par excellence*, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) is now an important player in the forming of governments in Malaysia. Its members have helmed state administrations and held key cabinet positions, and the DAP currently has 42 Members of Parliament – more than any other party.
- Despite its long trajectory, relatively little is known about the inner workings of the DAP. A combination of tradition and conscious choices have led to a unique governing structure, where power is located in positions and levels different from other parties.
- In contrast to UMNO, DAP leadership positions at the parliamentary (or division) level are not crucial. A Party committee retains control over the choice of parliamentary candidates, and this minimises heated competition for these posts.
- The DAP has traditionally been a small and centralized party. However, as the Party expands in reach and membership, its state-level chapters are growing in power and influence.
- The DAP also does not have direct elections for national leadership positions. Instead, party branches vote for delegates to represent them at national congresses, where they, in turn, vote for members of the Party's apex body, the Central Executive Committee (CEC).
- Candidates for the CEC do not campaign for specific leadership posts. Instead, the party members elected to the Committee allocate the different positions among themselves. While the Secretary-General and the Chairman are the Party's most senior leaders, the National Organizing Secretary is a particularly influential position.

## INTRODUCTION

From its beginnings in 1965, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) has had its share of ups and downs. Following an initial burst of popularity in the late 1960s and 1970s, the Party seemed consigned to representing a limited number of non-Malay urban constituencies. Furthermore, the 1990s were challenging for the DAP, as Malaysia's booming economy and more inclusive messaging from the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition dented its electoral fortunes.

However, following the Asian Financial Crisis and Malaysia's *Reformasi Movement*, and particularly the 2008 elections, the DAP has successfully established its place in the country's political landscape. Under the 2018-2020 Pakatan Harapan (PH) administration, its MPs headed key ministries such as: Finance; Transport; Primary Industries; Communication and Multimedia; Human Resources; and Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change. The party has also been involved in state administrations in Selangor, Perak, Johor, Kedah, Melaka, Negri Sembilan, Sabah, and especially Penang.<sup>1</sup>

At present, the DAP is one of the pillars of the opposition PH coalition and has more sitting MPs than any other party – including the erstwhile dominant party, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). It is now a fixture in urban and ethnically mixed constituencies on the Peninsula's West Coast and in East Malaysia. The DAP's 42 MPs and 108 state assembly representatives come from constituencies in every state in the country, save for the three northern states of Perlis, Kelantan, and Terengganu.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding this, the DAP's image is still one inextricably linked to oppositional politics. Beyond the names of its national figureheads, relatively little is known about how the DAP is organized and governed internally. It has important procedural and structural differences from other established parties which mean that power and influence within the party coalesce in ways quite different from other parties.

This Perspective provides a background of the DAP's development, before setting out its structure and electoral processes. A follow-up Perspective will delve into the candidates for the party's Central Executive Committee as well as the strategic challenges facing the Party going forward.

## BACKGROUND

As with some aspects of Malaysia's history, such as the founding of the Malay-language newspaper Utusan Melayu, the DAP's roots are in Singapore. When the city-state left the Malaysian Federation in 1965, members of the People's Action Party living in Malaysia remained politically active. The leaders' initial application to the Registrar of Societies (RoS) to officially record the grouping was rejected, as the proposed name – PAP Malaya – was too close to that of an existing party. A second application with the proposed name of the Democratic Action Party was approved in 1966.<sup>3</sup>

The Party's first policy document, the 'Setapak Declaration', was adopted in July 1967. It stated an 'irrevocable commitment' to a free, democratic and socialist Malaysia with an emphasis on racial equality and multiracialism.<sup>4</sup> One of the Party's key principles was to

contest a “Bumiputera” versus “non-Bumiputera” dichotomy’, and instead mobilize Malaysia’s population to ‘focus on the gaps between the “haves” and “have-nots”’.<sup>5</sup> In the decades since, the DAP has championed social democracy, religious and racial equality, inclusive politics, parliamentary democracy, and also the rights of East Malaysia within the Malaysian Federation as stated in the Constitution.<sup>6</sup>

As with all opposition parties in Malaysia, the DAP has had to contend with the logistical, financial and operational challenges of competing against the dominant Barisan Nasional (BN). One of BN’s key strengths was its ability to pool candidates from its member parties and match them to the largest ethnic group in each seat.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, as a small party operating by itself, the DAP had to find and mobilize candidates single-handedly.

Despite defining itself as a multi-racial party, the DAP has been perceived as a largely Chinese party, with a smattering of Indian leaders and members. Due to its strength in urban and ethnically mixed constituencies, it has traditionally competed against non-Bumiputera BN members such as the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Parti Gerakan Rakyat.<sup>8</sup>

The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), BN’s dominant member, has used a variety of narratives to attack the DAP. One prominent strand often used is that the DAP, due to the composition of its membership, is inimical to Malay interests.<sup>9</sup> Another is that the DAP has sought to stoke dissatisfaction and racial unrest in Malaysia.<sup>10</sup> Other frequent depictions of the party accentuate its non-Malay nature and charge that the DAP uniquely pursues the interests of the Chinese community.<sup>11</sup> While these charges are debatable, they have been successful at limiting the DAP’s ability to break significant ground among Malay voters, particularly in rural constituencies.

Furthermore, the ideological competition between the DAP and UMNO has not been without cost to the former’s leaders, some who have been detained for extended periods on several occasions, mostly notably following the May 1969 riots and during Operasi Lalang in 1987.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, the party’s longevity and consistent electoral performance indicate that it fills a niche in Malaysia’s political ecosystem. From the mid-1970s until 1990, the Party secured nearly 20 percent of the national vote share. However, as with smaller parties in First-Past-the-Post parliamentary systems, this support did not translate into a commensurate proportion of seats (Table 1). Thus, despite obtaining 18 percent of all votes cast nationally in 1974, the party only secured 5.8 percent of seats in parliament.

**Table 1 - The DAP's Electoral Performance over Time**

	Total Parliamentary Seats	Candidates Fielded	Parliamentary Seats Won	Prop. Votes Obtained	Prop of Seats Obtained
1969	144	24	13	11.9	9.0
1974	154	46	9	18.3	5.8
1978	154	53	16	19.1	10.4
1982	154	63	9	19.6	5.8
1986	177	64	24	21.1	13.6
1990	180	44	20	17.2	11.1
1995	192	50	9	12.0	4.6
1999	193	47	10	12.5	5.2
2004	219	44	12	9.9	5.5
2008	222	47	28	13.7	12.6
2013	222	51	38	15.7	17.1
2018	222	47	42	17.4	18.9

Sources: [http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2197\\_arc.htm](http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2197_arc.htm); Saravanamuttu, Johan (2016), *Power Sharing in a Divided Nation* (Singapore: ISEAS); Democratic Action Party (1991) *25 Years of Struggle: milestones in DAP History* (Petaling Jaya: Democratic Action Party), pp. 98; NSTP Research and Information Service (1999), *Elections in Malaysia: A handbook of facts and figures on the elections 1955-1995*, Kuala Lumpur: the New Straits Times Bhd; [http://web.usm.my/km/32\(Supp.2\)2014/KM%2032%20Supp.%202\\_2014-Art.%202%20\(25-53\).pdf](http://web.usm.my/km/32(Supp.2)2014/KM%2032%20Supp.%202_2014-Art.%202%20(25-53).pdf); <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/lin20021219.pdf>

The 1990s were particularly challenging for the DAP. First, the country's rapid economic growth delivered concrete gains for many segments of the population, not least urban, middle-class voters.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Barisan Nasional's more inclusive messaging during that decade also increased its attractiveness to non-Malay voters. Then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad sought to elevate Vision 2020 as the nation's new narrative of transforming Malaysia into a progressive and developed nation with equal rights for all races.<sup>14</sup> The promise to discontinue the New Economic Policy (NEP) was seen as a positive step by many non-Malays.

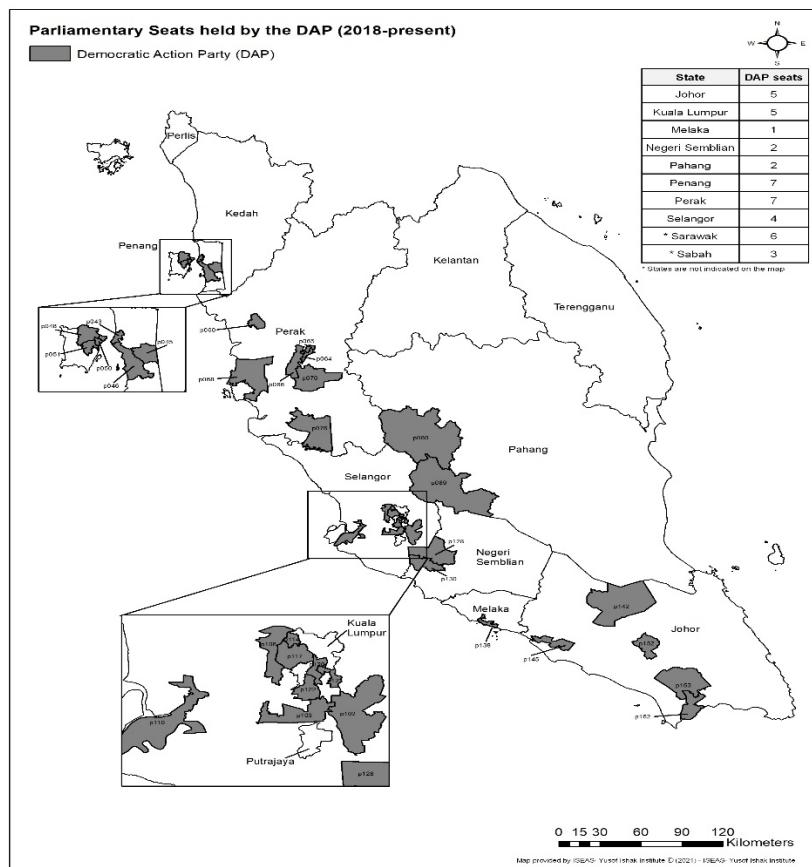
Aware of the limitations of competing individually in elections, from 1990 onwards, the DAP joined several political coalitions, including: Gagasan Rakyat (1990-1995); Barisan Alternatif (1999-2001; Pakatan Rakyat (2008-2015); and then Pakatan Harapan (2015-present). While this did not yield much at first, these partnerships were vital steps towards forging a multi-party coalition with enough support and resources to effectively take on Barisan Nasional. As part of these groupings, the DAP was able to unite the protest vote, pool resources with its partners, and match candidate profiles to the constituencies where they were fielded.

The benefit of joining forces with other parties was first observed in the 1990 General Election under Gagasan Rakyat. Due to agreements on seat sharing prior to the election, DAP and PAS avoided three-cornered fights, and the coalition performed markedly better than in preceding elections.<sup>15</sup>

This strategy also paid substantial dividends in the 2008 general election. Riding on mounting dissatisfaction with the Abdullah Badawi administration and deepening cooperation between the DAP and Anwar Ibrahim's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), the opposition managed to deny BN a two-thirds majority in parliament. These two parties had agreed on seat allocations with PAS before the elections, and the three came together to form the Pakatan Rakyat coalition immediately after their success.<sup>16</sup> That year, the DAP secured 28 MPs, up from the 12 it obtained in 2004. In the 2013 general elections, again as part of the Pakatan Rakyat coalition, the DAP was able to increase its ranks to 38 MPs.

In 2018, the DAP contested the general elections as part of the Pakatan Harapan coalition, made up of PKR, as well as the newly-created parties, Parti Amanah Negara and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia. The DAP performed solidly, contesting in 47 seats and winning 42.

**Figure 1 - Current DAP MPs by State**



Source: [https://www.parlimen.gov.my/ahli-dewan.html?ahli\\_name=&parti=PH+-+DAP&p>All&Filter=&uweb=dr](https://www.parlimen.gov.my/ahli-dewan.html?ahli_name=&parti=PH+-+DAP&p>All&Filter=&uweb=dr)

With the exception of the four northern-most and Malay-majority states, there are now DAP MPs in every state in the country, in addition to the Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory (Figure 1). In 2018, 83 percent of the seats it won were either urban or semi-urban constituencies. Likewise, of its present 42 seats, more than three quarters are in non-Malay majority seats and most of the rest are mixed constituencies (Table 2). Only one parliamentary seat held by the DAP – Raub – has a Malay majority electorate.

**Table Two. DAP-Held Constituencies by Urban Status and Ethnic Composition  
(2018-Present)**

		Malay-Majority	1
		Mixed	8
Rural	7	Non-Malay Majority (50-70%)	18
Semi-Urban	14	Non-Malay Majority (70%+)	13
Urban	21	Bumiputera Majority (East Malaysia)	2
Total	42	Total	42

Sources: *Urban Status as defined by Politweet (2013); <https://election.thestar.com.my/>*

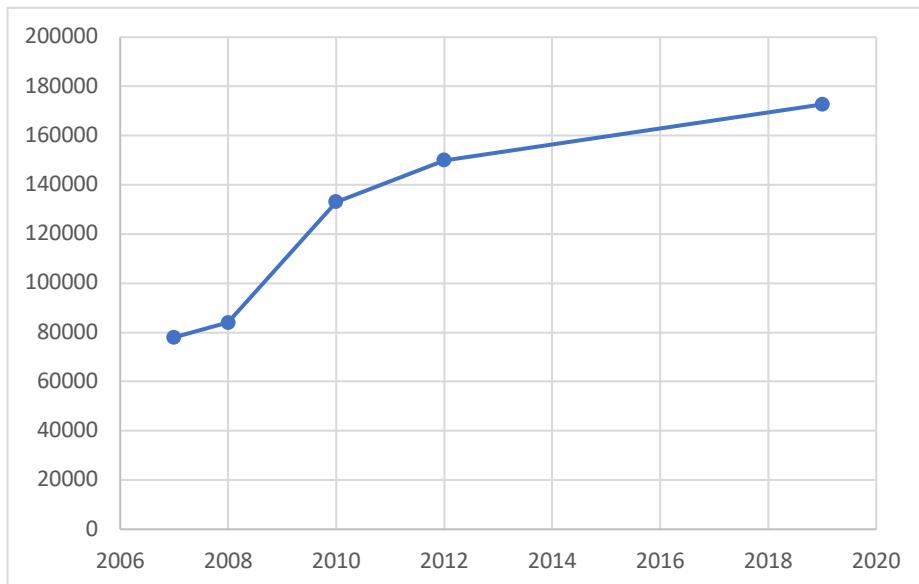
## PARTY MEMBERSHIP, STRUCTURE, AND ELECTIONS

### *Membership*

In tandem with its successes at the national level, the DAP's membership base has expanded significantly. Despite its long trajectory and history of campaigning, in 2008, the party had fewer than 80,000 registered and active members. That year, Pakatan Rakyat's solid electoral performance and victories at the state level in Penang, Selangor, Perak, and Kedah substantially increased the party's appeal among the public.<sup>17</sup> Membership subsequently surged to 133,000 in 2010 and 150,000 in 2012 (Figure 2).

Despite considerable electoral fervour in the run-up to the 2013 general election and Pakatan Rakyat winning the popular vote, the coalition did not secure a parliamentary majority. This affected membership, with numbers plateauing over the next few years. However, numbers then increased with the advent of the Pakatan Harapan administration in 2018. As of 2019, the party had 173,000 members, with the applications for a further 40,000 still being processed by the party's Standing Sub-Committee on Membership. While certainly a consistent trend upwards, these are still relatively small numbers for a party of the DAP's vintage and historical role. They are mitigated somewhat by volunteers that help out with party activities, but do not formally join.

**Figure 2 DAP Party Membership Over Time (2008-2019)**



Sources: *Speeches given by the Secretary General at DAP Party Congresses and Conventions, various years*<sup>18</sup>

As with most political parties, becoming a member of the DAP is not difficult. Membership is open to all Malaysians 17 years and older who are not already affiliated with a political party. Dues are RM 10 per year, and lifetime membership is RM 200.<sup>19</sup> Membership requests are evaluated at the branch level, and then a sampling of the applications are scrutinised at a deeper level by the Standing Sub-Committee on Members at Party Headquarters.

However, the DAP has exacting requirements of its elective representatives. Local councillors, state assemblypersons, and MPs commit to contributing a specific percentage of their income to the party, and may also be requested to donate a percentage of their pension accruing from these positions once they retire.<sup>20</sup> In the case of MPs, Parliament actually remits their payment to the Party which, in turn, pays its MPs after deduction of contributions.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Party Structure*

As with other parties, the DAP has structures at the branch, parliamentary, state and national level. Be that as it may, these different levels play distinct roles in the party and are influential to varying degrees. As the Party grew in size and complexity, it also introduced a number of procedural changes.

Beginning at the micro level, branches are the basic building blocks of the DAP. As with other parties, it is at this level that members and volunteers organize events, raise funds and, crucially for MPs and state-assembly members, gather local-level information on needs and issues that residents have.

These party branches are also key for DAP elections, as they select delegates to vote at state and national party elections and can also nominate candidates for leadership positions at the state and central levels. New branches can be set up with a minimum of 50 party members, and the number of delegates that a branch can send to national events is roughly proportionate to its membership size.<sup>22</sup>

Each branch must hold an Annual General Meeting once a year and submit the requisite paperwork to the Registrar of Societies (ROS) by year-end to maintain their active status.<sup>23</sup> When branches hold their AGMs, they also choose their delegates to attend the national congress or conference that year, as well as the state equivalent – termed a convention.<sup>24</sup> Branches hold elections for their own leaders every other year.

As with its membership, the number of DAP branches has grown significantly since 2008. That year, there were more than 300 branches, which increased to 700 by 2010. The number jumped to 1,128 in 2012, before the ROS argued that the party had failed to fulfil the requirements for holding a party election.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the ROS issued a moratorium on the establishment of new branches. The moratorium was rescinded in 2019 under the Pakatan Harapan administration. That year, there were 1,110 registered branches, with a further 667 awaiting approval.<sup>26</sup> The bulk of these applications has since been processed, and there are currently about 2,000 operating branches.<sup>27</sup>

A Parliamentary Liaison Committee (PLC) can be set up in a constituency with at least two party branches, and brings together the MP, state assembly members, the Chairmen of the Youth and Wanita divisions for the seat, and the Chairmen of the branches.<sup>28</sup> However, in contrast to UMNO, which has very powerful party positions at this level, this layer of the DAP party structure is not particularly influential.<sup>29</sup> The Chairmen of PLCs are not elected, and the Committees focus on coordinating activities across the constituency. In addition, PLCs can be dissolved if the CEC so decides.

This structure is by design and was done to avoid creating expectations that leaders at this level would be the *de facto* choice for the party to field in the parliamentary or state assembly elections for that seat. Instead, candidate selection is carried out by the five-member Candidature Selection Committee at headquarters.<sup>30</sup> This has enabled the Party to select and field promising candidates, and has also enabled a training period of sorts, with some members first being fielded in state seats before being sent to the federal level. Conversely, it has also given rise to criticisms of candidates being ‘parachuted’ into new constituencies, rather than emerging organically.<sup>31</sup>

And, in contrast to UMNO, which has very limited machinery at the state level, State Committees in the DAP are quite influential.<sup>32</sup> This concentration in power is, in part, an accident of history. Given its small size, the DAP could not afford to disperse power and resources at the parliamentary level. Instead, states afforded a more streamlined and effective structure for coordination.<sup>33</sup>

Leadership at the state level is elective. State-level Conventions are held every year, and elections for leadership positions on the State Committee occur every three years. The most important position in the 15-person Committee is typically the State Chairman followed by

the State Secretary.<sup>34</sup> In states where the DAP is part of the local administration, party leaders decide who joins the state cabinet and can appoint local councillors and senior managers of state government-owned GLCs. In addition, they provide input into the allocation of Constituency Development Funds that DAP MPs and state assemblypersons receive. Due to their local- or state-level nature, many of these decisions cannot be supervised by the national CEC.

While the voting decisions of each delegate sent to national conventions are not rigorously monitored, state-level party leaders do make their preferences known to members from their states. Those state leaders from bigger states and/or with large followings are thus able to influence national-level party decisions.<sup>35</sup> And, it is at this level rather than at the central level that different debates on strategy and preferences manifest themselves.<sup>36</sup> At present, the four states with the most members, branches, and delegates are, in descending order of importance: Penang, Perak, Johor, and Selangor.

According to its Constitution, Party Congresses must be held once every 36 months and members for the CEC are elected. Party Conferences are held in between and must be held no later than 18 months after a Congress.<sup>37</sup> In the past, national Party Congresses were held after the states had completed their own elections.

In total, about 4,000 delegates will attend the next Party Congress to elect members of the Central Executive Committee. Delegates are allowed to vote for the 30 members they would like to see joining the Committee. The 30 elected members to the CEC will then appoint, or co-opt, 10 further members to the CEC. It was a recent constitutional restructuring that had increased the number of elective positions in the CEC from 20 to 30, and there is now a 30 percent quota for female members.

Unusually, aspiring members to the CEC do not compete outright for positions. Instead, the positions are allocated among the members themselves, taking into account preferences, seniority in the party, as well as nominations or suggestions by top leaders.

The top positions in the CEC are: the Secretary-General, the Chairman, and the National Organising Secretary (NOS). The Secretary-General position provides overall strategic direction for the party. During the party's early days, the position was held for long periods of time. Indeed, Secretary-Generalship was held by party stalwart Lim Kit Siang from 1969-1999, while former Penang Chief Minister and Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng has held the position since 2004. However, internal reforms have placed a maximum three-term limit on the position, meaning that Lim must relinquish the position at the end of this term.

While less operational in nature, the Chairman is also a senior strategic position, coming in second in the Party's hierarchy and protocol. S/he chairs the CEC meetings, provides input on key decision-making processes, and is an important party figurehead. The Chairmanship has been held by senior party figures such as Chen Man Hin and Karpal Singh.

While the first two positions are strategic in nature, the National Organizing Secretary is a particularly influential position due to its oversight of operational matters. From laying the groundwork for national conventions and congresses, the NOS also liaises with other Pakatan Harapan members in the coalition's Majlis Setiausaha, which deals with

operational issues for the coalition. The incumbent is Anthony Loke, who is one of the leading candidates to become the DAP's next Secretary-General.<sup>38</sup>

## OUTLOOK

Once on the margins of Malaysia's political context, the DAP has come of age. It now has a network of branches spanning the country, and its members have served in key national and state positions. The Party now has 42 MPs, and will likely perform solidly in urban, mixed constituencies in the future.

As the DAP has grown in size and sophistication, it has introduced reforms to formalize leadership positions. These decisions have had concrete ramifications for where power within the party is located. In contrast to UMNO, where parliamentary levels of the party machinery are particularly influential, in the DAP these tasks are split between the branches and the state committees.

As with all parties in Malaysia, the DAP needs to conduct elections at determined intervals. Initially scheduled for mid-2021, the national party polls have been suspended due to the COVID pandemic. However, when they are held, there will be a changing of the guard, with key positions passing to the DAP's third generation of leaders. In addition, the party will need to take important strategic decisions – some stemming from its recent successes.

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<sup>1</sup> While perhaps less known than in the other cases, DAP State Assembly members in Sabah also held Executive Council positions in the Warisan-led state government under Chief Minister Shafie Apdal, and a DAP assemblyman in Kedah served as Exco during the Mukhriz Pakatan Harapan government from May 2018 till May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> <https://dapmalaysia.org/en/building-a-new-malaysia-for-all/>. This source cites 109 state assembly persons but predates the Sabah 2020 state election. In that election, the DAP retained its 6 elected state assembly members, but lost one nominated state-assembly person.

<sup>3</sup> Chew, Huat Hock. (1980) *The Democratic Action Party in Post-1969 Malaysian Politics: The Strategy of a Determined Opposition*, MA Thesis, Australian National University, pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Democratic Action Party. (1981) DAP: 15th Anniversary. Petaling Jaya, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> Liew Chin Tong (2021). *Lim Kit Siang: Patriot-Leader-Fighter*, (Kuala Lumpur: REFSA) p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> *Democratic Action Party: Constitution*, November 2019 version, pp. 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> Hutchinson, Francis (2018). *GE-14 in Johor: the Fall of the Fortress?*, Trends in Southeast Asia (2018-3), pp. 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> For example, over the 1986-99 period in Johor, the DAP ran against these two parties in at least 80 percent of all parliamentary and state contests.

<sup>9</sup> Following the collapse of Pakatan Harapan, in September 2020, Dr Mahathir stressed in an interview ‘the role that the minority in any constituency can play. So if we split the

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Malays, whether you like it or not, DAP or MCA will determine who is going to win. Not us.' <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/542347>

<sup>10</sup> As recorded in his 2011 memoir ‘The PAP mantle was now draped over the DAP, a party formed by the Malaysian Chinese members of the PAP. By persisting with the Malaysian Malaysia campaign, the DAP incited Chinese chauvinism and so helped stroke the fires of Malay racialism’. Mahathir Mohamad, *A Doctor in The House*, (Petaling Jaya: MPH Publishing), p. 199.

<sup>11</sup> On the eve of the 2018 General Election, then-Prime Minister Najib Razak commented in a live interview that the Pakatan Harapan ‘opposition ceramah are in towns and those present are not Malays and Indians. Most of them are DAP supporters.’ Source:

<https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/423595>. When prominent Chinese educationalists joined DAP prior to the 1990 General Election, then Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba was quoted in Nanyang Siang Po stating that DAP was playing with sectarianism and solely pursuing Chinese interests at the expense of national unity and the interests of all Malaysians. Nanyang Siang Po. (1990, August 20) ‘Abdul Ghafar Baba: DAP allies with Chinese educationalists to gain votes and create social division (嘉化：行动党招揽华团人士捞取选票制造分裂).’

<sup>12</sup> Crouch, Harold (1996). *Government and Society in Malaysia*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 97, 109.

<sup>13</sup> Chin, James (1996) ‘The 1995 Malaysian General Election: Mahathir’s Last Triumph?’ Asian Survey 36, no. 4 (1996): 393-409. Accessed August 4, 2021. doi:10.2307/2645406.

<sup>14</sup> Liew Chin Tong (2021), *Lim Kit Siang: Patriot-Leader-Fighter*, p. 106.

<sup>15</sup> This was made possible since PAS was a member of Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah, which itself was a component member of GR. However, the question whether the DAP should cooperate with PAS was also a source of dissent, with Chinese educationalists resigning in the aftermath of the 1995 General Election due to disagreement with the top leadership’s decision to abandon unofficial political cooperation with PAS. Tan, Yao Sua. (2012) *Political participation and the Chinese Education movement in Malaysia: The role of Lim Fong Seng*, Working Paper series 144/12, University Science Malaysia Centre for Policy Research and International Studies: 18-19.

<sup>16</sup> Pepinsky, Thomas (2009). “The 2008 Malaysian Elections: An End to Ethnic Politics”, *Journal of East Asian Studies* 9 (2009), 87-120.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Liew Chin Tong, DAP CEC member, 6 July 2021.

<sup>18</sup> <https://dapmalaysia.org/en/archive/dap-national-congressconference/a-responsible-partner-in-power-2008/>; <https://dapmalaysia.org/en/archive/dap-national-congressconference/dap-central-executive-committee-report-2010/>; <https://dapmalaysia.org/en/statements/2012/12/15/20865/>; <https://dapmalaysia.org/en/central-executive-committee-report-2019/>

<sup>19</sup> *Democratic Action Party: Constitution*, November 2019 version. Members must also be of sound mind and cannot have legal convictions offences involving dishonesty or ‘moral turpitude’. DAP Constitution, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *Democratic Action Party: Constitution*, November 2019 version, pp. 8-9.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Liew Chin Tong, DAP CEC member, 6 July 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Branches with 25-50 members can send two delegates to vote, those with 51-100 can send three, and each additional 100 members will allow a branch to send one more delegate. *Democratic Action Party: Constitution*, November 2019 version, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Wong Shu Qi, DAP member and MP for Kluang, 9 July 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Prospective members can join a branch any time but must have joined by the end of January to be able to vote in that year’s AGM, which is usually held in April or May. In order to send delegates to vote at the state and national levels, branches must have at least 25 qualified, active members (ie. those who are life members or are up to date with their yearly dues). Interview with Wong Shu Qi, DAP member and MP for Kluang, 9 July 2021.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2017/07/07/ros-says-dap-legit-party-but-must-fresh-leadership-polls/1415923>

<sup>26</sup> <https://dapmalaysia.org/en/central-executive-committee-report-2019/>

<sup>27</sup> To prevent existing branches splitting to gain more delegates, at least 80 percent of the members of a proposed new branch must also be new to the party.

<sup>28</sup> *Democratic Action Party: Constitution*, November 2019 version, p. 30.

<sup>29</sup> Indeed, it is the divisional level in UMNO that sends delegates to vote in party elections, and division heads are usually fielded as the candidates for MP.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Liew Chin Tong, DAP CEC member, 6 July 2021.

<sup>31</sup> See for example <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/437396>.

<sup>32</sup> Two series of reforms, first by Tunku Abdul Rahman and then by Mahathir Mohamad in the 1980s, broke the power and influence of state party heads in UMNO. For more details, please consult Azeem Fazwan, A. F. (2011). ‘Culture and politics: an analysis of United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) 1946–1999’, Sudostasien Working Papers No. 46. Berlin: Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften, Humboldt University.

<sup>33</sup> Liew Chin Tong (2021), Comment – ‘Why DAP’s leadership structure is better than that of UMNO’s?’, *Malaysiakini*, 3 January 2021.

<sup>34</sup> State chairmen that are not elected to the Central Executive can be invited to join, but do not have voting rights. The DAP Constitution, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> For example, Perak, as one of the states with the most party members, fields some 800 national delegates for CEC elections out of a total of 4,000.

<sup>36</sup> This can be seen in the more contested elections for state leaders. For instance, the state election in Johor was divided between candidates aligned to the incumbent state chairman Liew Chin Tong and former state executive councillor Tan Hong Pin. The state election in Perak saw the faction led by Nga Kor Ming and Ngeh Koo Ham competing against Thomas Su and M. Kulasegaran.

<sup>37</sup> The DAP national election was originally scheduled to be held on 20 Dec 2020, but was delayed for six months due to the start of Phase 3 of the pandemic. Anthony Loke announced recently that according to ROS regulations, all party elections will be suspended until the end of MCO 3.0. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/06/16/loke-dap-national-congress-slated-for-june-20-postponed-indefinitely-new-da/1982577>

<sup>38</sup> See for example - <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/574187>

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