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But through parties outside the BN

Participation of women in Sabah up slightly

Mary Chin

KOTA KINABALU: If anything, the 22 women candidates registering 26 per cent of the total number of candidates in Sabah in the 13th General Election show an increase by seven candidates over the 12th General Election in March 2008.

The figure (22) is probably the best so far since Sabah's independence in 1963. It is also heartening to note that 13 of them are newcomers.

Of the number, eight are BN candidates, four Star candidates, three PKR candidates, two PAS candidates, two SAPP candidates, one DAP candidate and two independent candidates. Eleven are vying for State seats and the rest Parliamentary seats, an equal number.

With only six Chinese women in the race, it is dominated by their Bumiputera counterparts, strengthening the belief that Chinese women are less interested in politics. Looking at the ethnic background of the 16 Bumiputera women candidates, it is an interesting mix: Kadazan (2), Dusun (2), Murut (2), Dusun Tambanuo (1), Dusun-Pakistan (1), Sino-Kadazan (1), Malay (1), Banjar-Malay (1), Bajau-Ubian (1) Anglo-Bajau (1), Suluk (1), Bisaya (1) and Orang Sungai (1).

The breakdown of age range is as follows:

Sixties (5), Fifties (7), Forties (2), Thirties (7) and Twenties (1).

At 63, Tanjong Batu's Datuk Hj Hamisa Samat (BN-Umno) is the oldest candidate while Olivia Chong Oi Yun, who is contesting the Sri Tanjong State seat under a Star ticket, is the youngest candidate in the electoral fray.

State seats:

● N3 Pitas: Dauseh Binti Queck @ Paraman (PAS) (Newcomer)

● N5 Tandek: Lisiah @ Anita

Baranting (BN-PBS)

● N12 Karambunai: Datuk Jainab Ahmad Ayid (BN-Umno)

● N15 Api-Api: Liew Chin Jin (Christina Liew) (PKR)

● N16 Luyang: Datuk Agnes Shim Tshin Nyuk (BN-MCA) (Newcomer)

● N16 Luyang: Chia Chui Ket @ Melanie Chia (SAPP)

● N35 Melalap: Noorita Binti Sual (DAP) (Newcomer)

● N38 Nabawan: Fatimah Binti Agitor @ Mohd Noor (Independent) (Newcomer)

● N57 Sri Tanjong: Olivia Chong Oi Yun (Star) (Newcomer)

● N59 Tanjong Batu: Datuk Hj Hamisa Samat (BN-Umno)

● N59 Tanjong Batu: Fatmawati Mohd Yusuf (PAS) (Newcomer)

Parliamentary seats:

● P167 Kudat: Rahimah Binti Majid (PKR) (Newcomer)

● P169 Kota Belud: Isnaraissah Munirah Binti Majilis @ Fakharudy (PKR) (Newcomer)

● P170 Tuaran: Erveana Ansari-Ali (Independent) (Newcomer)

● P174 Penampang: Melanie @ Melanie Annol (Star) (Newcomer)

● P175 Papar: Datuk Rosnah Abd Rashid Shirlin (BN-Umno)

● P177 Beaufort: Datuk Azizah Mohd Dun (BN-Umno)

● P179 Ranau: Julianah Bte Situn @ Widya Julia (STAR)

● P182 Pensiangan: Fatimah Binti Agitor @ Mohd Noor (Independent) (Newcomer)

● P184 Libaran: Rosnah Unsari (Star) (Newcomer)

● P185 Batu Sapi: Datin Linda Tsen Thau Lin (BN-PBS)

● P190 Tawau: Datuk Mary Yap Kain Ching (BN-PBS) (Newcomer)

● P190 Tawau: Datuk Dr Chua Soon Bui (SAPP)

Overall, there is quality representation going by the women's academic or professional qualifications.

Of the 22 women candidates, 20 have pursued tertiary education while the remaining two have at least upper secondary education level.

And what is conspicuous is that for the first time in the history of Sabah Elections, seven of the women candidates have legal qualifications and are either practising lawyers or ex-practising lawyers. The others are an ex-government official, an economist, a retired Super Principal and now an education consultant, an accountant, a biochemist, an electrical engineer, a former banker, a former music teacher, an ex-teacher, a former lecturer, a travel consultant and businesswomen.

Incumbent Member of Parliament for Papar, Rosnah, a mother of two, is defending her seat for the second term on an Umno ticket. The 40-year-old Puteri Umno Chief is also the incumbent Deputy Minister of Health. A one-time practising lawyer, she holds a Bachelor of Laws degree from the International Islamic University (IIU) and a Master of Arts degree in Political and International Relations.

Caretaker Minister of Community Development & Consumer Affairs, Azizah, 58, is contesting the P177 Beaufort parliamentary seat which she won unopposed in the 2004 Elections. A member of Umno Wanita Executive Committee, the incumbent Klias Assemblywoman is Umno Beaufort Division Wanita Chief and Sabah's first woman politician to be appointed Deputy Minister of Housing & Local Government in 2004. Initially, she had wanted to study medicine but her veteran politician father, the late Datuk Mohd Dun Banir, insisted that she pursue law studies. That led to her earning a Bachelor's degree

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(Hons) in Law and becoming Sabah's first Bumiputera woman magistrate in the eighties. Subsequently, she gave up practising law in favour of a political career.

For the third term, incumbent Karambunai Assemblywoman, Jainab, 60, is defending the State seat which she won with a majority of 3,018 in 2008. She first secured the seat in 2004 with a majority of 2,526. The UK-trained lawyer is a barrister-at-law with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Law and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree.

Practising lawyer Christina Liew, 60, who owns a legal firm in the State capital, is the PKR candidate for the N15 Api-Api State seat. She is a member of PKR Supreme Council and the party's KK Division Chief. Recently, she graduated with a Master of Laws (LLM) degree from the Bond University, Australia. She is also Founder President of the Society of Hope Kota Kinabalu, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), which has organised a number of fund-raising events in aid of welfare homes since its inception.

With a law degree, Murut lawyer Noorita, 33, is the DAP candidate for N35 Melalap challenging incumbent Melalap Assemblyman Datuk Radin Malleh who is also a lawyer by training.

Lawyer Rahimah, 35, a first-timer, is standing in the P167 Kudat parliamentary constituency. A Bajau Ubian, she graduated with a Bachelor of Laws degree (Hons) from Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Thirty-eight-year-old Erveana is

an independent candidate for the P170 Tuaran parliamentary constituency. Like her better known father Ansari Abdullah, she is a practising lawyer in the State capital.

Accountant Dauseh, 34, who is a Dusun Tambanuo from Pitas, has a diploma in Management and Business Administration. She is the Deputy Head of Muslim Women Body in the P167 Kudat parliamentary constituency.

Incumbent Tandek Assemblywoman Anita, 59, is a member of PBS Supreme Council and Deputy Chairperson of the Sabah Housing & Town Development Authority (LPPB). She

has a Bachelor of Arts degree (Hons) in Human Resources.

Kudat-born Shim, 59, holds a string of positions such as Sabah MCA Wanita Chief, National MCA Wanita Vice-Head and Women Bureau Chief of the Federation of Chinese Associations Sabah (FCAS). The former secondary school teacher is armed with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from the European University of Ireland.

Incumbent Luyang Assemblywoman Chia, 56, is an economist by training with a Master of Science degree in Economics from the London School of Economics. The SAPP Vice-President cum Wanita Chief, who is defending her seat for the third term, served as Assistant Minister of Finance prior to leaving the Government to be in the Opposition. She was also a founder member of the Sabah Women's Advisory Council (MPWS) in the

eighties, and led its Economic Committee for one term.

Independent candidate Fatimah, 39, is contesting two seats - N38 Nabawan and P182 Pensiangan. A Murut businesswoman, she holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and has previously worked as a teacher and lecturer.

Twenty-nine-year-old Olivia, a Sino-Kadazan from Tawau, studied at the Wing College in Singapore where she graduated with a Diploma in Tourism. Currently, she is Star's Tawau Wanita Chief.

Ex-teacher Hamisa, 63, became a businesswoman and an NGO activist before venturing into politics. She led the Pemuda Tawau branch for many years. The incumbent Umno Tanjung Batu Assemblywoman was also Political Secretary to the Minister in the Chief Minister's Department.

Fatmawati, 30, who is Hamisa's challenger, is the Chairperson of Ameerah Sabah and Treasurer of PAS Kalabakan, and has a degree from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

Thirty-one-year-old Munirah, a Kadazan Muslim, is an electrical engineer who is contesting in the P169 Kota Belud parliamentary constituency under a PKR ticket.

Sabah Star Wanita Chief, Melanie, 61, hails from Penampang and is a retired Senior Manager of an international bank. The ex-banker is a member of the Associates of Institute of Bankers, London. The businesswoman aspires to wrest the Penampang parliamentary seat from incumbent Tan Sri Bernard Dompok.

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From music teacher to MP

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She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology & Anthropology from the University of Malaya in 1979.

Sandakan-born Rosnah from the Orang Sungai community has SPM qualification and is a businesswoman. She is trying her luck in the P184 Libaran parliamentary constituency on a STAR ticket.

Incumbent Member of Parliament for Sandakan, Tsen, 57, is defending the seat for the second term on a PBS ticket after serving for two years and four months to be exact. She was catapulted into the turbulent world of politics by the tragic death of her husband, Datuk Ir Edmund Chong Ket Wah in October 2010. Previously, she was a much-sought after music teacher in Kota Kinabalu with qualifications from the Fellowship London College of Music, United Kingdom. She once led the Kota Kinabalu Music Society as its Chairperson.

Retired Super Principal (JUSA 'C'), Datuk Mary Yap Kain Ching, 62, a newcomer, is

contesting in the Tawau parliamentary constituency under a PBS ticket.

The educationist has four qualifications under her belt – Master of Arts in TESOL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) from the University of Leeds, UK; Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in English Literature (University of Malaya, KL); Diploma of Education (Majoring in English) from University of Malaya, KL; and Certificate in Training of Trainers from University of Manchester, UK.

Incumbent Member of Parliament for Tawau, Dr Chua, 58, a biochemist by profession, left the Government to be in the Opposition six months after the March 2008 General Election. A member of SAPP Supreme Council, she has a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from the University of London. She obtained her doctorate in Complementary Medicine from the International University of Complementary Medicine in 2004.

However, whether all the women candidates are able to notch victories come May 5 is left to be seen. It's relatively tough for some though. Political analysts predict that some of the contenders may even lose their election deposits.

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