

Taib quits Govt to stand in Sebandi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat - Datuk Amar Haji Taib Mahmud has resigned as Federal Territory Minister to contest in the Sebandi State by-election in Sarawak.

He has tendered his resignation letter to Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad yesterday, and his resignation has been accepted, he said today.

He said his resignation would take effect on Monday.

Acting Prime Minister Datuk Sen Dr Mahathir Mohamad confirmed today that Datuk Amar Taib had tendered his resignation early this week.

"We have to let him go if he wants to. But an announcement will only be made when the time comes."

"As a normal procedure, a candidate for the State elections has to relinquish his Ministerial position before he can contest," he said.

When asked whether there would be a Cabinet reshuffle in view of the resignation, Datuk Seri Dr

Mahathir said: "Only one person is resigning from the Cabinet so why should there be a reshuffle. We will have to find another one to replace him, that is all."

The Sebandi seat fell vacant with the resignation of the Barisan Nasional State Assembly member, Puan Sharifah Mordiah Tuanku Fauzi on Feb 18.

There had been speculation since then that Datuk Amar Taib would be returning to Sarawak to contest in the by-election. It is believed that he will take over as Chief Minister after the resignation of Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Ya'akub who has been in poor health.

Nomination day for the by-election is on Tuesday

and if there is a contest, elections will be held from March 25 to March 28.

Datuk Amar Taib who is also the deputy president of the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, a component party of the Barisan Nasional, was also unanimously appointed today by the party as its candidate for the by-election.

Speaking to reporters after the PBB supreme council meeting in Kuching today, Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Rahman confirmed that Datuk Amar Taib would be brought into the State Cabinet after the by-election.

Datuk Patinggi Rahman, who underwent a heart surgery six months ago, said that he would continue to be the Chief

Minister for the time being.

He did not elaborate, saying: "We will cross the bridge when we come, to it."

He also denied rumours that PBB's second deputy president, Datuk Alfred Jabu, who is also a deputy Chief Minister, would take up a Federal appointment. "Datuk Jabu is too valuable an asset..."

He has done a good job and is one of the most loyal and respectable Iban leaders in Sarawak,

"We will however be making recommendations to Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn on a possible replacement (for Datuk Amar Taib).

Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Rahman also announced that Puan Sharifah Mordiah Tuanku Fauzi, who vacated the Sebandi seat on Feb. 18, would be appointed a political secretary to the Chief Minister.

Another PBB supreme council member, Mr Paul Anding, would also take up a similar position to succeed Haji Balla Munior who has resigned.