

**Taib plays dirty under pressure**  
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Both Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and Sarawak Chief Minister, Taib Mahmud are afraid that Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim and Pakatan will replace BN in Sarawak.

Anwar's presence is a threat and so the two BN leaders have instructed the police to act, by obstructing Pakatan members, or by making arrests.

Ever since Anwar (right) arrived in this resource rich state a week ago, he has been hounded by the police and thrice, had his ceramah, which took place in Kuching, Satok and Betong, stopped.

On the night of April 2 in Betong, the stronghold of the Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister Alfred Jabu, a 1,000 strong multi-racial crowd greeted Anwar's arrival with shouts of "Reformasi".

All went well for over an hour and four PKR candidates delivered their speeches, without any interruption. However, just ten minutes into his delivery, a uniformed policeman told Anwar to stop addressing the crowd. This caused much tension within the gathering.

Anwar compromised and said he would make a short speech. After 20 minutes, the policemen stopped the oration, again.

**Sarawak, stand up**

Meanwhile, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, named the DAP candidates for the state election in a ceramah in Kuching.

Lim hoped that the selection of young and courageous candidates would bring positive change to Sarawak: "In a sense we are asking the people of Sarawak to have the courage to stand up. Do you have the courage to stand up?"

"If Sarawak dares to stand up, Malaysia will dare to step forward for a new era of democracy and justice, freedom and prosperity," said Lim and likened this state election to the 'battle of the century' for Sarawak.

Lim's ceramah in Kuching was also interrupted by the police who claimed the meeting was illegal.

DAP supporters at the ceramah were angry when district police chief Mun Kok Kiong and his team seized the microphone from DAP state leader Chong Chieng Jen, as he made his speech.

The police intervention caused several DAP supporters to rush to Chong's defence, for a tense face-off with the police.

Chong Chieng Jen speaking to reporters in KuchingMun refused to accept that the event was held at the party's premises for the launch of the party's announcement of candidates.

The policeman was insistent that the event should stop and the crowd disperse.

Chong (left) told the media that the police appeared to be part and parcel of BN: "It looks like that the force is the 15th member of BN".

In another show of desperation, on the following day, the Sarawak state government barred an independent NCR land rights activist from entering the state.

Steven Ng, had arrived from Kuala Lumpur but was barred from leaving Kuching International Airport, by the state security department.

"They asked me at immigration whether I was Steven Ng, at which point I knew I was in trouble because my official records do not carry that name."

Taib is under immense pressure, from Najib, for BN to remain in power. He faces stiff competition from the forces on the ground but also from the invisible presence of Clare Rewcastle Brown (left) of Sarawak Report and Peter John Jaban (right) of Radio Free Sarawak.

BN feels forced to take drastic action and prevent critics from entering Sarawak, in the lead-up to the state elections.

BN feels that the presence of critics would severely limit Taib's chances of re-election.

In this "battle of the century", the casualties - the people, are kept hidden and propaganda is used to hide the harsh realities and the horrors of living under the BN regime of Taib Mahmud.

### **Strategy might backfire**

The strategy of using the police to harass the Opposition might backfire on Umno.

Instead of winning the people's votes and being seen to be fair, by allowing the true democratic process of making an informed choice to take place, Umno might alienate many fair-minded citizens.

The people have a right to attend and hear political ceramahs. It is their democratic right to be allowed to make an informed choice.

When BN and the police intimidate Anwar, it only shows that Anwar's influence is increasing by the day. BN may be living on borrowed time.

The action, by the police, is stripping the people of Sarawak of their democratic right to hear the Opposition candidates.

Instead of maintaining law and order, the police are acting as Umno and BN's poodle. The police's rôle appears to be political. It also appears that the government prefers to support an ill-informed and illiterate rural population in Sarawak from knowing the truth.

The people are aware of their right to attend and hear political ceramahs, but the level of intimidation and the deportation of the activist Ng from a Malaysian state, shows that Taib (left) is desperate.

It would be pointless appealing to the Home Minister Hishamuddin Hussein or the PM Najib as both have too much to lose. That is why they will be reluctant to challenge Taib.

They would not care if the people of Sarawak see that the barring of Steven Ng from Sarawak, shows that 1Malaysia is just a sham.

As we approach polling date in Sarawak, the harassment against the Pakatan coalition will get more and more intense.

Malaysians must note that the signal this sends out is that if normal citizens can be arbitrarily harassed in this way, then no one is safe.

The love of power has a tendency to make monsters, and possibly murderers, out of those who seek to cling onto power, when they are loathed by the rakyat.

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