

**Sabah senator ditches BN, backs Pakatan  
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In a bid to blunt Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's damage control measures in Sabah yesterday, Senator Maijol Mahap today officially announced his resignation from all BN and Upko posts to align himself with Pakatan Rakyat.

Maijol, who made the announcement at his Kampung Kokobuan residence in Goshen, Kota Marudu this afternoon, said Kota Marudu Upko division leaders would similarly follow in his foot steps.

In his exit speech, Maijol said had no confidence in Najib's "last minute" announcement yesterday of a royal commission of inquiry (RCI) to investigate allegations that immigrants were granted citizenship for votes after waiting years for a resolution.

Najib had yesterday met with local BN leaders in Sabah and announced the formation of the RCI almost six months after it was mooted, but repeatedly delayed.

The premier had also urged its leaders to remain loyal after two of its representatives, namely Tuaran MP Wilfred Bumburing and Beaufort MP Lajim Ukin announced their defection on July 29.

Maijol had raised eyebrows when he appeared along side opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim on stage at Wilfred's defection ceremony.

He had then at the ceremony announced his intention to quit Upko but did not say whether he would formally align himself with Pakatan Rakyat.

Following the initial announcement, speculation had been rife that Maijol's defection was imminent.

Sabah BN's Kota Belud MP Abdul Rahman Dahlan, too, had expected the third defection.

"Senator Maijol Mahap from Upko is joining Anwar this Sunday. No surprise as he announced leaving Upko two weeks ago with Wilfred Bumburing," he said in a Twitter posting.

In the double defection last month, it was announced that Wilfred will lead the Angkatan Perubahan Sabah while Lajim would take charge of Pakatan Perubahan Sabah under the auspices of SRF to help garner local support for the opposition coalition.

'SRF incorporated into Sabah Pakatan'

When contacted, PKR vice-president Tian Chua, who was present at the Kota Marudu ceremony today, said Maijol will be joining the APS, a platform for mobilising support for Pakatan in the next general election.

"We will also be having a coordinating committee which will facilitate all activities organised by us (Pakatan), APS and PPS," he said, adding that all three ex-BN men namely Lajim, Wilfred and Maijol would be sitting on the committee.

Tian Chua added that it was "likely" that Maijol will be fielded as a candidate in the next general election, but the decision would need to be finalised by the top leadership.

Asked if more BN members would be aligning themselves with Pakatan, Tian Chua said the opposition coalition's door was open to those who identified with its struggle, but denied attempting to engineer defections in the state.

"Our focus has never been on defections but we're trying to create a groundswell in the sense that Sabahans can take back the power in deciding the agenda," he said.

An example, he said was how this groundswell had forced Najib's hand in setting up the RCI against the wishes of local Sabah leaders and former premier Mahathir Mohamad.

Instead of party-hopping, the trend for the last three BN men was for them to join the Pakatan-friendly SRF which will be a Sabahan vehicle to garner support for Pakatan.

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