

Sibu MP Robert Lau dies
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Sibu parliamentarian Robert Lau, 68, from the Sarawak United People's Party (Supp) passed away this morning after a protracted battle with cancer, triggering yet another by-election.

NONEHis private secretary Peter Hu told Bernama that Lau passed away at 11.10am, while he was at the Selayang hospital.

Preparations are underway to transport his body to Sibü.

Supp secretary-general Sim Kheng Hui, expressed sadness over the loss.

Sim said that he has known Lau on a personal level for a long time and described him as a 'nice person'.

"He is a good and hardworking politician who has contributed much to Sarawak. His death is not only a lost to Supp but also to the people in the country," he said.

Lau, who is also deputy transport minister, had been Sibü MP for five terms, since 1990. He beat Sarawak DAP chief Wong Ho Leng and PKR's Lim Chin Chuang in a three-cornered fight at the 2008 general elections.

Under election laws, a by-election will have to be called within 60 days. This will be the 11th by-election in the country - and Sarawak's second - since the last general election.

azlanLau won by a majority of 3,235 votes in 2008 by bagging 19,138 votes against Wong's 15,903 and Lim's 812.

Supp is likely to again face stiff competition from DAP in a contest that would set the tone for the upcoming state elections.

The constituency, which include the logging town of Sibü (below), is made up of Chinese (60 percent), Melanau (20 percent), Iban (18 percent) and Orang Ulu (1.1 percent).

In his latest posting in his blog entitled 'Delivering on promise, deciding the future', uploaded two months ago, Lau argued that voters should continue to vote for BN in the upcoming Sarawak state poll.

Prominent business family in Sibü

Lau's family controls the KTS group, a powerful conglomerate with interest in the timber industry and the media.

KTS group owns several newspapers including the Borneo Post and Oriental Daily News.

Lau's elder brother, Hui Siong - the founder of KTS group - died in October 2004, also due to cancer.

Lau leaves a wife, Janet Lau, and three children.

NONEThe Supp vice-president was appointed deputy housing and local government minister

in March 2004, a portfolio which he retained after the general election in 2008.

However, after Najib Razak took office as prime minister in April last year, he was made the deputy transport minister in a minor cabinet reshuffle.

Lau was once given the nickname, "toilet king", for his tireless effort in fighting to create a culture of cleanliness in public toilets in the country during his stint at the local government and housing minister.

EC to meet on April 16

Meanwhile, the Election Commission (EC) expects to receive the notice of vacancy for the Sibuluan seat on Monday following the death of Lau.

Chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof said the EC would normally announce the dates for the nomination and by-election within 10 days following the vacancy of a seat.

Abdul Aziz told Bernama that the EC was still waiting for the notice from the Dewan Rakyat speaker.

He said the EC is expected to meet on April 16 to decide on the poll date.

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