

**Taib's dilemma is of his own making**  
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COMMENT Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud, the white-haired "raja" of Sarawak, remains undecided as to whether he should "abdicate" at this juncture or stay on for yet another inning.

The Barisan Nasional (BN) in Kuala Lumpur thinks that "maybe he has been in power too long". In any case, they definitely feel that "when you've been in power too long, people get tired of you".

No many are taking the BN thinking seriously, for it comes from people who have kept Taib in power for so long to ensure the proxy control of Sarawak from Putrajaya.

Why then is the BN seemingly in a hurry? Why didn't it move immediately after the 2006 Sarawak election, when the writing was on the wall in the wake of the unprecedented losses by the ruling coalition.

NONETAib (left) has been in public office for so long now that it wouldn't really make an iota of a difference if he decides not to leave at this juncture. It'll be a bit of an anti-climax for Putrajaya to facilitate someone to stay in office for 29 years and suddenly turn around and tell him that he has outstayed his welcome.

In his own words, Taib is willing to go "if people don't want him" - but he knows very well that those around him won't hear of it. Who will prop up their lavish lifestyles? They have too much at stake from the gravy train, a crime punishable with a long stretch behind bars in any Western democracy - if they survive the trial in the media.

But then these are completely unbelievable creatures, without a tinge of social conscience. They'll thumb their noses at the Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission (MACC) because the ruling elite in Putrajaya needs the 31 parliamentary seats in Sarawak.

They are counting on Taib to deliver them, yet again, come 2013 or sooner, and by hook or by crook. This calls for someone who doesn't hesitate on the job, and Taib fits the bill.

A new take on legislation and enforcement

The charmed life of the superstitious Taib - no offence to his consultant bomohs - lies in the fact that the long arm of the law is yet to catch up with him, for even so much as an unpaid parking ticket. This must make us all wonder about selective prosecution and selective persecution.

Do we have laws because we need to enforce them? Or are they there just in case we want to enforce them? This is a new take on legislation and enforcement, Third World style.

Of course there's also the little matter of Taib being a member of the Freemasons, the secret brotherhood of men of influence in high places.

Bomohs, the freemasonry, sycophants and Putrajaya aside, a good political system is one where the show goes on, no matter who comes and who goes. In that sense, Taib has been an abysmal failure. It seems that the people around him, the fat cats in tow, still can't do without him after nearly three decades.

They wouldn't hesitate to appeal to self-serving local sentiments and thunder that "we cannot allow Putrajaya to decide, like in Sabah, who our chief minister should be".

Behind the cynical façade, Taib's continuing dilemma is that his maternal uncle and predecessor Abdul Rahman Ya'kub put him in power to create a political dynasty along the lines of an absolute monarchy. The unrepentant, inseparable duo is unmindful that Sarawak as a democracy belongs to the people.

Taib, in tribute to his craftiness in handling Putrajaya, has indeed NONEsucceeded in creating an absolute political monarchy in Sarawak, except for the little fact that he's having trouble deciding when to go to allow Rahman's dynastic succession formula to kick into place. The heir apparent, Tanjong Manis MP Norah Abdul Rahman (right), is waiting willingly in the wings, like the little robot she is in the family. Norah is Taib's cousin and Rahman's daughter.

She will have to stand in a by-election, returned unopposed of course, to succeed Taib. But a by-election has to be ruled out at this juncture, since the state elections have to be held by the middle of next year, at the very latest.

So, it looks like Taib will have to lead the state BN into battle again and only step down in his mid-term, at the earliest. Norah would first have to be returned in a by-election, unopposed of course, unless she is commanded by her father to offer herself in the coming state election.

There can be any number of other jokers in the pack, all playboys and some gambling addicts, who think that they can step into Taib's shoes. All of them are Melanau, and from within the tight family circle.

At this stage, we can be forgiven for wondering exactly what is going on in the politics of Sarawak. This is virtually unprecedented anywhere in Malaysia, notwithstanding some examples in the federal government. Why are Taib and his uncle so obsessed with ensuring that their family continues to rule Sarawak, in perpetuity if possible?

Happy is the man who can walk away and look back. Taib will have extreme difficulty in putting this into practice. He can't see beyond the immediate reality that he and his uncle have created in the politics of Sarawak.

Out there, it's a whole new generation, Internet-savvy and one that does not slavishly buy the old order or the old ways of doing things. It will be interesting to see whether Taib and his uncle can get away with what they have up their sleeves for Sarawak.

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