

**Taib won't leave now as it will hurt BN**  
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ANALYSIS BN would be shooting itself in the foot if it lets go of long-serving Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud prior to the state election.

This is because a sudden departure after 29 years would give a signal that something is amiss in the coalition, said political analyst Samsul Adabi Mamat.

azlan"If he steps down now, the perception would be that there is a crisis between Kuching and Kuala Lumpur and this will benefit Pakatan Rakyat.

"The federal government will want to be careful about this," said the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia faculty member.

Taib, who was appointed chief minister in 1981, piqued interest when he said on Tuesday that he may not contest in the Sarawak election and is ready to step down at long last.

tengku adnan tengku mansorHis statement was supported by Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor (right) who told Malaysiakini that "people get tired" of a leader who stays in power for too long.

It is this 'frustration' which BN will be able to convert into 'relief' by dropping Taib, said Sarawakian analyst Jeneri Amri.

"People are tired of Taib, be it the Chinese or the bumiputera (and) his departure would improve BN's image leading up to the Sarawak election.

"It would actually be better if he names his successor and allows the person to lead the coalition into the election," said the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak lecturer.

'Feel good factor' not enough

Disagreeing, Samsul said that the sense of relief gained from the long-anticipated resignation would not mean more votes for BN.

"It is not the same as in 2004 (general election when Abdullah Ahmad Badawi led BN to a stunning victory after replacing long-serving Dr Mahathir Mohamad).

"The opposition was weak then because (Opposition Leader) Anwar Ibrahim was behind bars.

"The Sibü by-election (where SUPP conceded its traditional stronghold to DAP) is a strong indicator that the opposition is growing in strength in Sarawak," he said.

Moreover, he said, despite Taib's growing unpopularity the veteran statesman still has a very strong influence in the majority rural Sarawak and BN could do well to make use of that.

A look at the 2008 general election results indicate that the opposition still has a long way to go in these rural areas, he said.

## Dismantling of Sarawak BN

While he is sceptical about Taib's hints, PKR Padungan assemblyperson Dominique Ng said that the resignation of their apparent 'public enemy number one' would mean the unraveling of Sarawak BN.

"In Sarawak the whole state structure is held by one man. Taib is the central figure, even more central than Mahathir was to Malaysia," he said.

dominique ng interview 010606 gesturingIf Taib leaves, he said, there will be a leadership vacuum and there will no longer be a figure who could hold all the component parties in Sarawak BN together.

"Right now we already see fissures within Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) and even in Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS)," Ng (right) said.

Speculation is rife over the likelihood that SUPP will leave the coalition, following a dip in BN's popularity among its traditional voter base from the Chinese communities.

In fact, he said, even Taib's own Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) is riddled with factions following the senior politician's apparent divide and rule strategy.

Each of the "heirs-apparent" have one by one been played out of politics, leaving only those who are relatively weak in leadership, he said.

He added that with Taib not around to "prop them up", many senior politicians in Sarawak, including Deputy Chief Minister Alfred Jabu Numpang and SUPP chief George Chan will be forced to go.

## Umno a bogeyman

If anything, Ng said, Sarawak BN will use this as a means to garner public support for Taib to stay.

"If Sarawak BN is weak then Umno will come in. This has been used as a bogeyman to gain support," he said.

NONEWhile Taib's departure would be a win for Pakatan on all levels, he said, it is unlikely to happen.

"Taib will probably not go. He has seen what had happened in the Philippines and in Taiwan (left), where you can get prosecuted over your misdeeds after you leave office," Ng said.

The one way out of that is to appoint a successor who can protect his interests after he has resigned.

"But it's not so easy. Look at Mahathir and Abdullah. The successor ended up not listening.

"And if Taib does appoint a nominee, the people will know and for us (Pakatan), it will be just as good as if he was still chief minister" Ng added.

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