

**S'wak Tribune editor in hot soup over Taib article**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
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The editor of Sarawak Tribune, the state's oldest newspaper which returned to the newsstands in May after a four-year hiatus, has been suspended for publishing an unflattering report on Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud.

The report, 'Is Taib Mahmud testing the waters?', which was a Bernama wire service report, appeared on the front page of the newspaper on Monday.

NONEIt quoted a number of political analysts questioning the chief minister's motive in announcing his willingness to quit ahead of a state election.

According to the commentators interviewed by Bernama, Taib had no intention to step down after 29 years in power and that his statement was carefully made to elicit support from local leaders.

"He will not step down. He just wants to know who is complaining. His remark is a calculated statement to find out who are against him," Bernama quoted James Chin of Monash University as saying.

Malaysiakini has learned that Tribune executive editor Paul Si, who helmed the newspaper since it hit the streets three months ago, has been suspended for two weeks. There are unconfirmed reports that he has since been given marching orders.

Taib's daughter livid

According to sources, Abdul Taib's youngest daughter, Hanifah, stormed into the newspaper office on Monday night to berate the staff over the publication of the report.

Hanifah, a former managing editor of the Tribune, held a lengthy meeting with top editors until 2.30 the next morning.

Si, who has 25 years of journalism under his belt including stints with Malaysian Insider and The Star as well as Borneo Post, was at the office briefly on Tuesday morning.

sarawak tribune paul si 020910He was subsequently summoned to the Chief Minister's Office and has not returned to the Tribune office since.

Si did not answer telephone calls from Malaysiakini.

Since Tuesday, the newspaper has gone on a damage control exercise with report after report of local leaders calling on Taib to remain as chief minister.

Si warned by colleagues

A Tribune source told Malaysiakini that the newspaper's staff were saddened by Si's situation especially since he took full responsibility for the 'offensive' article.

"He told the chief minister's daughter that he was solely responsible for the incident," said the source, adding that Si did not want others to be punished.

Following this, a senior Tribune manager informed the staff that Si had been suspended for two weeks and been warned not to speak of the incident.

The source also said Si was unlike other editors in Sarawak in that he was open to publishing stories critical of the Taib administration and news reports featuring opposition personalities.

"He calls a spade a spade. We had warned him before. We told him not to be a hero. But he would reply: 'The worst thing that will happen is I get fired la'."

Linked to Taib

Sarawak Tribune was suspended indefinitely (below) on Feb 9, 2006 for reproducing a controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad.

sarawak tribune suspended of publicationThe management of the 61-year-old English daily then resolved to close down the newspaper although the suspension order was later rescinded. The paper was then relaunched as the Eastern Times.

Eastern Times published its last edition on May 19 with the new Sarawak Tribune rolling off the press the next day, and incidentally being launched by Taib.

The ownership of Sarawak Tribune is believed to be linked to Taib himself. It is a subsidiary of major construction firm Naim Cendera, owned by Abdul Hamed Sapawi.

Abdul Hamed is Taib's cousin and according to Forbes magazine, is in Malaysia's richest Top 40 list.

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