



As for Taib, a less-than-sweeping BN performance in the state election of May 2006 and Umno-BN's shaky performance in the 2008 national polls have combined to put his lengthy tenure under the microscope. Taib is seen as a holdover from a past that voters want to forget.

But Taib, a fabulously wealthy man, has got too much at stake to want to leave under pressure. He wants to calibrate the succession such that it suits his best interests. And interests, as Charles de Gaulle famously reminded, are permanent; allies come and go.

It looks like Taib's ready to tough out the pressures that are growing on him to cede to the political gravity that overtakes even titans, barring a Castro or a Kim.

Samy Vellu has conceded, but Taib reckons he can attempt to stretch his longevity to match that of hereditary monarchs.

He's an albatross around Umno-BN's neck but the latter will find it difficult to finally rescind its time-honoured principle of 'deliverer-endures-as-gamekeeper' on which the coalition's ancillary leaders, like Samy Vellu and Taib, once flourished.

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