



Ku Nan: Umno has no plans to enter Sarawak
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INTERVIEW Umno has once again rubbished rumours that the party has set up shop in Sarawak, nor is it intending to.

The party's secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor had denied the speculations, and said that they are merely a ploy to destabilise the BN coalition in the state.

In a recent exclusive interview with *Malaysiakini*, he also revealed plans for the Sarawak Chief Minister Taib Mahmud, whose reign in the state would come to 30 years by March 2011.

But when asked about the rumours that Umno has set up a branch in the largest state in Malaysia, Tengku Adnan was on the defensive almost immediately.

“No, no, no, no. Umno never said that we want to go into Sarawak. Never,” he said during the interview at his office in Menara Dato Onn in Kuala Lumpur.

The Putrajaya MP was also shocked when he first heard of the rumours.

“I also got a shock when I heard that there's a Sarawak Umno Hari Raya open house. Mana ada Umno Sarawak (Where is there an Umno Sarawak)? If we're not there, we're not there lah,” he said.

However, he said that there were “requests” for the oldest party in the country to move into Sarawak.

“There are some who said that they want to do it, Sarawakians themselves,” he said.

Even then, Tengku Adnan said that there are no plans for the party to move into the state where Malays make up 21 percent of the population there, despite the requests.

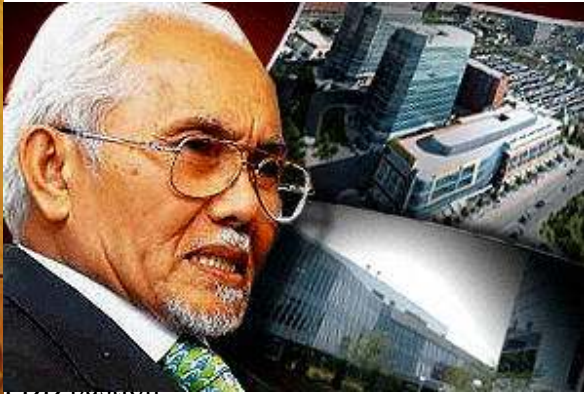
In fact, when asked about the Sarawakians proposing for the formation of Umno in the state, he said: “They cannot. They would need approval from the headquarters.”

And is headquarters planning to give approval?

“No, no, no, no,” said Tengku Adnan.

'Rumours by the opposition'

Speculation regarding the party's presence had been circulating as early as 2006, when businessman Affendi Jeman, leader of a self-styled [Sarawak Umno Pro-Tem Committee](#) (JPUNS), had been bragging that JPUNS had recruited 2,000 Umno members in Sarawak.



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Even former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad relented back in 2002, saying that the only way Sarawakians can join Umno is to do so in the peninsula.

However, the rumours started swirling again when it was speculated that the JPUNS has been registered with the Registrar of Societies and, as Tengku Adnan pointed out, held an open house.

But quashing the allegations, he said that they were merely the doings of the opposition to “destabilise” the coalition in the state.

“They've tried all kinds of ways and other means, like getting the NGOs to disturb us. But our component party leaders and members know.

“They accuse us of everything, even their (PKR elections). And now they say that we're going into Sarawak. We're not doing it at all.

“We have a strong PBB there and we'll continue to work with them along with Sarawak United People's Party, Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party and Parti Rakyat Sarawak.

“Some of our component parties may be weak, but it doesn't mean that we'll tell them to 'get lost',” he said.

When asked if the group trying to kick-start the party in Sarawak are BN saboteurs, he said that it is possible.

“Maybe. I don't know. I can't say that. Maybe they have good intentions or maybe they are saboteurs,” said Tengku Adnan.

Taib a liability?

When asked about Taib's standing as chief minister and whether he is considered a liability, Tengku Adnan said that it was a matter of perception.

“It is just perception. Maybe because there is already a strong character in place, you keep on building this perception that he cannot lead... Maybe to us, he is not a liability.

“You tell one lie, and tell it a thousand times, it becomes the truth. That's the job of the

Opposition. They just lie,” he said.

After holding the post for 29 years, Taib is the longest-serving chief minister in the country, even surpassing Mahathir's 22-year reign. And allegations have arisen that Taib and his family have purportedly amassed obscene wealth during that tenure.

But at the end of the day, Tengku Adnan said that it was up to the people of Sarawak to decide on whether they want Taib to continue leading the state after the Sarawak elections said to be held next year.

“We have to listen to the leaders and people in Sarawak and it's up to them. I believe that the current component party still likes to stay in power.

“We can only advise and see what's the best. But at the end of the day, it's their choice and not our choice.”

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