

**It's a political powder-keg in Sabah**  
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Both Anwar Ibrahim and Najib Tun Razak are pushing their political trolley shopping for MPs in Sabah, but it may all blow up in their faces.

KUALA LUMPUR: It's finally arrived, the almost official announcement that Sabah Barisan Nasional MPs Lajim Ukin and Wilfred Bumburing have quit the coalition.

Lajim, who announced his indication to withdraw last week at a ceramah, said: "I will sacrifice my RM20,000 monthly pay and perks as a minister for my struggle to uphold Sabah's rights and fight corruption and cronyism."

Bumburing, meanwhile, said last night he had sent in his resignation letter to BN secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and Sabah Chief Minister Musa Aman.

Both had earlier professed that they would remain "independent", BN-friendly and likely to contest in the 13th general election.

But rumours are rife that Lajim may join PKR because de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim has allegedly promised him that if he helps PKR win most state seats and Pakatan Rakyat wins in Sabah, then Lajim will be chief minister. Lajim has been eyeing the post since 1994.

However, this is a rather sceptical scenario for Lajim is said to be Sabah "most famous" frog and will go only where the guarantees are water-tight. He (and Bumburing) were on that "infamous team" who were supposed to join Anwar in 2008 but did not.

With a looming 13th general election and speculations of it "happening anytime now", Sabah is quite frankly a powder-keg with both Anwar and Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak pushing their political cart shopping for spineless MPs. Frankly, you get the impression that everyone's sharing a room, if not a bed and the political lines merely illusory.

Both Lajim and Bumburing, meanwhile, are also holding separate "functions" on July 29, during which they will announce their pullouts from their respective parties – Bumburing from Upko and Lajim from Umno.

Interestingly enough, Anwar is also scheduled to be in Sabah next Sunday and tipped to attend Bumburing's launch of a new political vehicle Sabah Reform Movement and Lajim's Buka Puasa event.

What this will be is an irritation to Borneo Agenda campaigner Jeffrey Kitingan, who has been trying to find a middle road with PKR vis-à-vis Pakatan in Sabah with the hope of achieving a consolidated opposition fight against BN.

But this isn't likely to happen with Anwar having no interest in Sabah per se except to shop for MPs who are prepared to jump over to his side for money and position.

A source close to Jeffrey told FMT that Anwar wanted Jeffrey's STAR to sort out and come to a compromise on the seats issues with Lajim and Bumburing.

"But Jeffrey flatly refused. He is not going to go with Anwar's strategy.

"Jeffrey is crystal clear about STAR's direction and will not compromise on his Borneo Agenda," said the source.

### **Anifah close to Najib**

Meanwhile, online blog, Malaysia Today, confirmed Kitingan's angst.

The report by Raja Petra Kamarudin noted that Jeffrey is "quite upset" that Anwar is negotiating with BN leaders to switch camps "after the next general election".

"This would mean the opposition would have to 'give way' to these people and allow them to win the election.

"The second would be: what if after they win they change their minds and decide not to jump after all because Barisan Nasional has counter-offered a higher price?

"They will only be jumping after the general election and after they have won their seats.

"[In the meantime], the opposition would have to help them win these seats, which is very risky.

"Hence [the reason why] Jeffrey is violently opposed to the idea and has told Anwar so in no uncertain terms," wrote Raja Petra.

He also pointed out that Anwar is hellbent on containing Jeffrey. And he is using Ansari Abdullah to do so.

Ansari is allegedly backed by Kimanis MP Anifah Aman, who is Chief Minister Musa Aman's brother. Anifah is also the federal level foreign minister and close to Najib.

### **Lajim factor**

In this equation too we have Lajim, who Ansari and team see as a threat. It is known here that Anwar has also allegedly promised Lajim the PKR state chief seat and this is not sitting well with Ansari's people.

This aside, Lajim is also no friend of the Amans. He is closely aligned to Umno vice-president Shafie Apdal, who's also got Najib's ear.

In fact, it was Lajim who, under the direction of Shafie, instigated protests and calls for Anifah to move out of Kimanis earlier this year and allow a Kimanis-born to contest in the constituency. But that fizzled out.

It's common knowledge that Shafie dreams of becoming Sabah's next chief minister and that Lajim who holds sway over westcoast Muslim in Sabah is an important ally for him.

Rumours of Lajim quitting Umno began last year and was as quickly “settled” when another speculation broke that Shafie, who is Rural Development Minister, had appeased Lajim with a RM150 million road project.

But apparently this wasn’t enough for Lajim who believes he has much to offer Sabah politics and wants to defend his Beaufort seat.

According to Sabah political blogger Selvaraja Somiah, with his latest announcement, Lajim will now train his guns on Musa and those closely aligned to the chief minister.

He said Lajim believes that Musa is poisoning Najib against him and is standing in the way of his candidacy.

“He believes Musa wants him out, so Lajim will do anything to enhance his political image, even if this means humiliating his senior colleagues in the party including Musa,” he said.

But he pointed out that the strategy may not work because the older Sabahans remember Lajim’s treachery from way back in 1987.

“In 1987, Lajim humiliated his then boss Joseph Pairin Kitingan during the swearing-in ceremony at the Istana because he was not appointed as deputy chief minister.

“He called him all kinds of names. Then in 1994, Lajim defected from Parti Bersatu Sabah which won the Sabah election.

“His action opened a floodgate of defections from PBS and saw the collapse of Pairin’s PBS government. He is doing it again,” said Selvaraja.

### **Lajim-Shafie’s strategy**

Selvaraja said Lajim believes that if he continues with his “tantrums”, then Najib will sooner or later come to believe that Musa is no longer acceptable by the majority as chief minister.

In fact, word along Umno corridors in Kuala Lumpur is that some Sabah MPs have already conveyed their no confidence in Musa.

“Given this fractious relationship, any political development could serve as the trigger for a major upheaval.

“The moment Lajim withdraws support from Umno, others inside and outside the alliance will begin to exercise their leverage.

“They [Lajim and Shafie] are hoping to use this strategy to kill off Musa.

“They want Najib to intervene in Sabah’s affairs but that’s the last thing Najib would want to do. He knows what Musa has done,” he said.

It sounds like Lajim and Bumburing are hedging their bets and their followers are likely to do the same.

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