

## **Sarawak CM: Guessing Game Over**

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KUCHING, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- The guessing game on who is likely to helm Sarawak is over when Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud named his successor after submitting his resignation letter to Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Abang Muhammad Salahuddin today.

Abdul Taib announced that Special Functions Minister in the Chief Minister's Office Tan Sri Adenan Satem, who is also Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) Information chief as his successor to a packed news conference after an audience at the Astana Negeri here.

The resignation takes effect Feb 28 and the new chief minister will be sworn in on the same day.

Noted as Abdul Taib's close ally, Adenan, 68, is also a former senior vice-president of PBB.

Adenan was chosen over two other contenders proposed by the PBB caucus on Saturday - party deputy president Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg and vice-president Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hassan.

The succession means that Adenan will be the first Malay to be appointed as Sarawak chief minister.

As Abdul Taib is a Melanau like his predecessor and uncle, Tun Abdul Rahman Yakub, it was perceived that the former would have favoured a Melanau candidate to take over from him.

The first two chief ministers, the late Tan Sri Stephen Kalong Ningkan and the late Datuk Tawi Sli were Ibans.

Prior to his appointment as special function ministers in the Chief Minister's Office, Adenan had served as state assistant land development minister, state land development minister, state social development minister, and state agriculture and food industries minister under Abdul Taib.

He was later appointed federal natural resources and environment minister, but resigned in 2006 to contest in the state election that would pave the way for him to take over as chief minister.

Unfortunately, Abdul Taib was not yet ready to step down, thus leading to differences between them.

However, they patched up and Adenan was brought back to the state cabinet as special functions

minister in the Chief Minister's Office after he won the Tanjong Datu seat in the 2011 state election.

Adenan's return to active politics then fuelled speculations that he was the most likely candidate to succeed Abdul Taib.

Speculations were rife that Adenan was being groomed to take over as Abdul Taib himself was federal special function minister from 1975 to 1978.

Although the affable Abang Johari, who is also state housing minister, had defeated Adenan for the PBB deputy presidency, he was perceived to be Umno-friendly.

On the other hand, Awang Tengah, who is also state planning and resource management minister was not chosen allegedly due to objections from a number of state Cabinet members as he was still young and lacking in experience.

There were talks that Cabinet members might resign en bloc if Awang Tengah were to be appointed, but they were willing to accept either Adenan or Abang Johari.

However, political analyst Dr Jeniri Amir felt Abang Johari deserved the post as he was well respected by all races and boasted experience, apart from being a senior PBB leader.

With the succession plan well in placed, the Barisan Nasional and PBB have to appease the Iban community as Deputy Chief Minister and PBB deputy president (I) Tan Sri Alfred Jabu Numpang, who is the most senior member of the state Cabinet, was left in the lurch.

Jabu's exclusion might not go down very well with some members of the Iban community who felt that he ought to be given the post.

Jabu, who had been avoiding the press off late, had said that he would leave politics once Abdul Taib calls it a day.

In retrospect, some 20 years ago Abdul Taib had said that he was grooming Abang Johari, Adenan and former agriculture minister Datuk Seri Mohd Effendi Norwawi to take over as chief minister.

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