

SOUTHEAST ASIAN AFFAIRS 2017

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REALIGNMENT OF STATE-CENTRE RELATIONS: The Adenan Factor in Sarawak

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The Chief Minister has said time and again that Sarawak will never secede from Malaysia but that doesn't mean the State cannot fight for its rights as enshrined in the Federal Constitution, The Malaysia Agreement 1963, The Malaysia Act, The Inter-Government Committee Reports and Recommendations and the Cobbold Commission Reports. (Press Statement from Chief Minister's Office, 7 November 2016)

The statement above issued by the Chief Minister's office partly explains why Sarawak's politics took a slightly different trajectory after Adenan Satem took over as the new Chief Minister for Sarawak from Taib Mahmud on 28 February 2014. He argues in his speeches that Sarawak had been left behind and needs to catch up with other states in the Federation of Malaysia. In Sarawak's local dialect, Adenan Satem used the word "*ngepong*", referring to catching up with other states. His catching-up strategies are central to the current centre-state relations in Sarawak. This chapter discusses centre-state relations between Putrajaya and Kuching, specifically after Adenan Satem took over from Taib Mahmud. Responses from the centre to this political realignment are also discussed.

Federalism in Malaysia

A federal system divides power between the national government and the smaller local governments. The advantage of a federal government is that it helps to