



One Man's Meat by PHILIP GOLINGAI [@PhilipGolingai](#)

# Jamawi: Judge me for what I am

Jamawi Jaafar, a Murut from Sabah, is in a four-way race for the Umno Youth deputy chief post and wants to be judged for his leadership abilities, and not where he comes from.

**S**ELAYANG no problem boss, said a Selayang Umno Youth chief aspirant at the 26th floor of the Mara headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. "Selayang saya yang control (I'm the one who controls Selayang)."

The "boss" referred to was Jamawi Jaafar. He is a 39-year-old politician from Sabah and one of the four contestants vying for the Umno Youth deputy chief post.

The fair-skinned Jamawi smiled and said, "Boss, thank you for the support". Whether the politician believed he had the support of the Selayang Umno Youth division, it was hard to tell.

It was about 4pm on Thursday. Jamawi was done with an interview with two journalists in his office at the highest floor in the Mara headquarters.

He entered a waiting room where several individuals were waiting to meet him.

Jamawi sat on an armchair and told them that he was discharged from the Kuala Terengganu hospital the day before.

"I was warded from Sunday to Wednesday. I was at a Besut Umno

function. At around 10.30pm on Sunday I spoke for five minutes when I felt dizzy and I saw stars. I asked permission from the audience to stop talking. I sat down and passed out," he said.

"What happened in Besut?" I asked in an interview in his office.

"Doctor said I was exhausted. I'm not tired. But since June 6, I was in the Likas hospital (near Kota Kinabalu) for two months to care for my twins who were born prematurely (two months early and each weighing 980g and 1.1kg)," he said.

"Then came the campaigning (for the Umno Youth deputy chief post)."

Jamawi's office is next to the office of Minister of Rural and Regional Development Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal, an Umno vice-president.

He is the Special Task Officer to the Minister.

"Are you a Shafie man?" I asked. It is a pertinent question as in Sabah, your political fortune can depend on whether you are a Shafie or a Musa man (Sabah Chief Minister and Sabah Umno chief Datuk Seri Musa Aman).

"I'm only working for the minis-

ter. My job is I'm an aide of Shafie. I give 100% to the minister I work for. But people perceive that I'm a Shafie man," said the politician with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Universiti Putra Malaysia.

"Previously the (Rural and Regional Development) minister was (Tan Sri) Muhammad Muhammad Taib. In 2009, when Muhammad was going for the Umno deputy president post, I gave him my full commitment."

The Tenom Umno Youth chief may or may not be a Shafie man. However, if whispers were to be believed, the perception that he is had a political cost.

On April 16, Musa announced all of Sabah Umno's 13 parliamentary and 32 state candidates for the May 5 General Election, except the Tenom MP seat. Musa said he would name the Tenom candidate after a few issues were resolved.

Tongue wagged that the Tenom seat was given to Jamawi. However, later Musa announced that the incumbent Datuk Raimee Unggi, a Musa man, was retained.

"What's your take on the recent suggestion by Sabah Mufti Bungsu @

Aziz Jaafar that members of Sabah's ethnic communities who were Muslims should consider themselves as Malay?" I asked.

"Even though I am a Murut and a Muslim, I am not embarrassed to say that I am a Murut," he said. "I don't consider that because I am a Muslim that I am a Malay."

(The Murut community inhabits the interior of Sabah such as Tenom, Keningau and Pensiangan. They were once headhunters. A majority of them are Christians.)

"What is a Murut doing in a Malay party?" I asked.

"When Umno entered Sabah it changed its constitution to allow Bumiputera community in Sabah to join it," he said. "The struggle of Umno is not only for Muslims but also for non-Muslims."

The party, he said, was accepted by non-Muslims in Sabah. "Take the Tenom MP seat and Kemabong state seat (in the Tenom parliamentary constituency). About 65% of the voters are non-Muslims and yet the party has won the Tenom seat since 1999," he said.

"How is it to be a non-Malay in a party that is called United Malay

National Organisation?" I asked.

"We are all the same. There is no discrimination.

"Umno is unique. Once you are an Umno member, you are accepted into the Umno family. In Umno there are also Indian Muslims who are members," he said, adding 25% of Umno members in Sabah are non-Muslims.

"A Malay newspaper reported that Umno members from Sabah get singled out in the party polls. What's your take?" I asked.

"Sometimes Sabah is perceived to be adik bongsu (youngest brother) of Umno. The state only accepted Umno in 1991.

"There are some who say that Sabah leaders are not as mature as their peninsula counterparts," he said.

"But that is perception. I want to be judged not from where I come from but my leadership abilities."

Umno Youth delegates will decide whether it is "raino noyo" (Murut for "ini kali lah" or this is the time) for Jamawi to lead them.

> Views expressed are entirely the writer's own.