

14 AUG 1998

PBB-Contest

THERE'S "INVISIBLE HANDS" IN DY PRESIDENT'S CONTEST, SAYS JOHARI

KUCHING, Aug 14 (Bernama) -- State Industrial Development Minister Datuk Abang Johari Tun Openg said today there are "invisible hands" involved in the the three-cornered contest for the deputy presidency of the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) at the party polls on Aug 28.

Abang Johari is challenging two other PBB leaders, incumbent deputy president Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha and state minister Datuk Adenan Satem in the first such contest for the post in 12 years.

"I am contesting not only against my good friend Datuk Adenan Satem but also invisible hands who are financially strong but dare not come out to contest for the post" he told reporters here.

Both Abang Johari and Adenan are party vice presidents.

Adenan, the Agriculture and Food Industries minister, received 32 nominations for the post, Abang Johari 14 nominations while Abang Abu Bakar managed to obtain only one nomination.

Abang Johari appeared emotional at the news conference when he talked of the tactics used by the "financially strong invisible hands" to influence the outcome of the contest for the party's No. 2 post.

Before the start of the news conference, Abang Johari asked: " Where's Borneo Post....it's no point if only the Sarawak Tribune and Utusan Sarawak are present".

The Borneo Post is regarded here as the more "independent" of Sarawak newspapers and is popular for publishing dissenting views from members of the ruling parties and as well as the opposition.

Abang Johari spoke of tactics being used by the "invisible hands" to influence the outcome of the polls, including by spreading word that because Adenan had received a nomination from the Asajaya division headed by party president and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, he (Adenan) had Taib's backing.

Asked if he foresaw a split in PBB, the backbone component member of the ruling State Barisan Nasional coalition, because of the contest, he simply replied: " I don't know".

Abang Johari also sprang another surprise when he denied that he would be defending his vice-president's post at the polls.

According to the list of candidates released by the party on Wednesday, Abang Johari's name was among 10 candidates vying for the vice presidency.

He said he was not a candidate for the V-P because he did not sign the form to defend the post and that he was only contesting for the deputy presidency.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to open the three-day PBB Convention from Aug 26.

Yesterday, a senior aide of Abang Abu Bakar, the incumbent deputy president, said that Abang Abu Bakar was unlikely to pull out of the race despite getting only one nomination.

The aide had also spoken of the "strong pressure" being applied on Abang Abu Bakar to withdraw but said that his boss would "fight it out".

With two weeks before the party convention, political observers said PBB was in for its most exciting polls in 12 years that would likely see major changes in the party line-up.

Taib and another party Deputy President Tan Sri Alfred Jabu, who represents the Dayak wing of the party (also known as the Pesaka wing) have been returned unopposed but there are contests for most of the other posts.

--BERNAMA
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