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Taib-Election

STATE BN TO WREST BINTULU AND TASIK BIRU SEATS FROM OPPOSITION, SAYS TAIB

KUCHING, Nov 11 (Bernama) -- The state Barisan Nasional (BN) is confident of wresting the two parliamentary seats of Bintulu and Tasik Biru from the opposition in the coming parliamentary election.

Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said today the BN, which secured 25 seats in the last polls in 1995, had a better chance this time.

In the case of Bintulu, which was won by the DAP, the situation was then much more complicated when the BN was more or less caught by surprise, he told reporters here after receiving the Gold Star for Quality Award '99, an international award won by the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) recently.

Abdul Taib, who is state BN chairman, said he was confident that the people in Tasik Biru, held by the State Reform Party (Star), would give the mandate to the BN as they had realised that only the BN could fulfil their aspirations for development.

"Tasik Biru was never an opposition seat because Dr Patau Rubis, the controversial Star president, had stood as a BN candidate and should have resigned when he crossed over to the opposition", he said.

Dr Patau, a former state assistant minister and former Sarawak National Party (Snap) senior vice-president, was sacked from the state cabinet and BN shortly after the 1995 election for breach of discipline.

At stake in Sarawak are 28 parliamentary seats, including the new constituency of Mambong.

On the BN list of candidates, Abdul Taib said at least 30 per cent "new faces" might be fielded.

He said it was the normal practice to change some candidates from time to time to ensure continuity in the BN leadership in the state.

"There is a need to inject experience and young blood in the lineup ...otherwise the party will become a house of museum" he said.

Abdul Taib said the BN component parties were working out the details of the new candidates to be submitted to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for consideration.

There had been talk that some "old guards", including at least two federal ministers, would not be renominated by Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), the backbone of the state BN.

However, Abdul Taib said, incumbents who could deliver would be retained but he did not disclose the probable line-up.

On the presence of the opposition, especially Muslim-based parties, he said he could not see any them giving any credible alternative way of serving the people, as good as the BN.

He said they were more of a "noisy opposition" and that the people should not fall prey to their instigation to attack the personality of some local BN leaders.

On the State Legislative Assembly, which is expected to sit from Nov 15-23, Abdul Taib said it would go on as scheduled but would adjourn after the tabling of the Budget speech.

The session would resume immediately after polling to enable both the BN and DAP representatives to campaign.

-- BERNAMA

CJ JK