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#### SPDP holds first meeting headed by Mawan

KUCHING, Wed. - The newly-formed Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party held its first meeting-cum-briefing here today attended by representatives from 55 former divisions of the deregistered Sarawak National Party (SNAP).

SPDP pro-tem president Datuk William Mawan Ikom described the meeting as a 'new era' after eight months of leadership crisis in SNAP which climaxed in its deregistration on Nov 5 and the registration of SPDP three days later.

"This meeting will also chart the direction where we will go and within the Barisan Nasional context," he said in his opening speech.

He said SPDP members needed to change in tandem with time and political situation.

Mawan, who is the State Environment and Public Health Minister, said what happened during the meeting of the SNAP central executive committee on April 20, 2002, was the tip of the iceberg.

(At that meeting, he and eight other party leaders walked out before voting took place to sack Bintulu MP Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing from SNAP).

"What happened in SNAP has become history, but its spirit and struggle must go on through SPDP," he said, adding that the formation of SPDP was a way of rehabilitating SNAP members as indicated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when commenting on its deregistration recently.

He said the meeting today was to endorse the steps that had been taken by the party leaders as well as to show the party's appreciation to Dr Mahathir, his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud for their sympathetic attitude to former SNAP members.

Later, Mawan said SPDP would exercise extra care when accepting people to be its members.

"The background of every applicant will be vetted because we do not want phantom members or unwanted elements to be our members," he said.

Strict checks on every applicant was to prevent members of other parties in the State Barisan Nasional from joining SPDP.

On the position of Limbang Assemblyman Richard Wong, who was a former SNAP senior vice-president, Mawan said he had been informed that Richard and his father, Datuk Amar James Wong Kim Min, were giving priority to reviving SNAP.

"The moment he gives it up, he should come and see me before it is too late. Once it is too late, he may be branded as partyless or face the consequences of the Barisan Nasional later on."

On the pro-tem committee line-up, he said he had taken over as the party's pro-tem president from businessman Cooplay Nyipa two days ago.

He said pro-tem deputy president was Saratok MP Datuk Seri Peter Tinggom Kamarau, pro-tem senior vice-president was Tasik Biru Assemblyman Peter Nansian Ngusie, pro-tem vice-presidents Marudi Assemblyman Sylvester Entrie, Krian Assemblyman Peter Nyarok and Baram MP Jacob Sagan, pro-tem secretary-general Dr Judson Sakai Tagal, pro-tem treasurer-general Tiong and pro-tem information chief Peter Howell.

The pro-tem Youth chief is Paul Igai and pro-tem Wanita chief, Winnie Jolly.

Mawan said Igai and Winnie would automatically be vice-presidents.