

PRS rivals defy Taib's order to 'talk peace'

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Chief Minister and Sarawak BN chief Abdul Taib Mahmud has ordered the two factions in crisis-ridden Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) to sit down and iron their differences but indications are such that the order will not be carried out.

"Do you think there could be any productive negotiations when the present atmosphere is not conducive for any reconciliation talks?" was the reply today from Wilfred Nissom, a faction leader aligned to PRS president Dr James Masing to a question on whether a date had been fixed for the talks.

Nissom, who a political secretary to the chief minister, was commenting on the release of the contents of a letter from the Registrar of Societies (ROS) earlier this week effectively declaring that the ROS only recognises the party headquarters at the registered address in Green Heights near Kuching International Airport.

The Masing faction last year set up their own party headquarters in Pending on the other side of town. The ROS has ordered the removal of the signboard from the Pending office and has requested the Council of Kuching City South to carry it out.

So far, although the mayor Chong Ted Tsiung has confirmed receiving such a letter from the ROS, the council has not yet taken any action nor indicated whether any action will be taken at all.

It is understood that the higher authorities have asked the council 'not to do anything for the time being.'

Tedewin Ngumbang, another faction leader aligned to the Masing faction, said the latest development was clearly calculated to embarrass Masing in the eyes of his colleagues.

Said Nissom: "Surely the talks is a more important matter than the party headquarters issue."

Sng group's meeting on March 31

However, both factions have earlier named their own four-member teams to the talks which Taib ordered after meeting Masing and his rival Sng Chee Hua and Sng's son Larry Sng, who is also a state assistant minister, in Kapit last month.

Sidi Munan, PRS secretary-general aligned to the Sng faction, said today he had the distinct impression that the Masing had no desire to hold any reconciliation talks.

A Masing faction leader did not dispute Sidi's statement, implying that if not for the chief minister's directive, they saw it as pointless to sit down and talk to the rival faction.

Sources said that the Masing faction may be in for a greater shock with the

impending triennial delegates conference (TDC) called by the Sng faction scheduled to take place on March 31.

"The higher authorities are waiting for us to submit the list of the new office bearers immediately after the TDC," said Sidi.

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