

Taib: A quarter of PBB candidates to be new faces
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The Sarawak Barisan Nasional (BN) line-up of candidates for the coming state election to be announced one day before nomination, will see the biggest change in Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), in terms of new faces being fielded.

Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud, who is also state BN chairman and PBB president, said it had been the practice to announce the final list of candidates only after it had been endorsed by the prime minister, who is also the national BN chairman.

"I have yet to receive the lists for the other three state BN component parties but around one-quarter of the 35 PBB candidates will be new and younger faces," he told reporters after officiating at the Sarawak Local Authorities' Councillors Seminar 2011 in Kuching today.

The Election Commission is expected to meet in Kuching on Wednesday to decide on the dates for the nomination of candidates and polling after the 71-seat assembly was dissolved today to pave the way for the 10th state election, set to be held next month.

At present, the 63 BN-controlled state seats comprise 35 from PBB, 12 from Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), and eight each from Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) and Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP).

Six other seats are held by DAP while Parti Keadilan Rakyat and Parti Cinta Malaysia (PCM), through an independent representative, one seat each.

On the question of his likely successor, Taib, who had said on Saturday that he would step down as chief minister mid-way in the new term, told his detractors to look at his past record, especially during his last 30 years in office.

"If you have studied my behaviour over the past 30 years, I have never lied or play dirty politics," he said when asked to comment on DAP leader Lim Kit Siang's statement that he had been "vague and elastic" about his plans to step down, including naming a successor.

"During an election, you don't want to create issues. I have been quiet compared to DAP," said Taib who will be defending his Balingian seat, besides being tasked to lead the BN polls campaign.

In taking Kit Siang to task, he added: "Do you think I am stupid (in not having a succession plan)? Why doesn't DAP name a successor?"

- Bernama