

Sabah BN unruffled over SRF threat

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By David Thien

Top Sabah BN leaders appear nonchalant at the impending establishment of the Sabah Reform Front (SRF), believed to be led by two parliamentarians who are still members of BN component parties.

The duo - Tuaran parliamentarian Wilfred Bumburing, the deputy chief of Upko, and Beaufort parliamentarian Lajim Ukim, a member of Umno's supreme council - are expected to launch the party tomorrow in Tuaran, some 50km north of Kota Kinabalu.

Incidentally, BN held a function in Tuaran yesterday which was attended by top state BN leaders and they were mostly upbeat about the latest development.

Sabah BN secretary Abdul Rahman Dahlan told Malaysiakini that the new party reflected the vibrancy of democracy in Sabah and SRF would likely dilute the opposition votes.

"If it is true that Bumburing will lead the new party, then it is further proof that opposition parties, especially Star and SAPP, have failed to capture the imagination of Sabahans with their rhetoric. That is a pity," he said.

Star, or State Reform Party, was formerly a dormant Kuching-based political party that has been revived by former PBS strongman Jeffrey Kitingan who set up the Sabah chapter, while SAPP is an offshoot of PBS that left BN in 2008. SAPP is led by former chief minister Yong Teck Lee.

It is understood that SRF will collaborate with Pakatan Rakyat and its launch will be attended by PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

DPM to the rescue?

It is also understood that an agreement has been reached that will allow its candidates to contest under the logo of Pakatan component parties in the 13th general election.

Like Abdul Rahman, Tuaran Umno division Hajiji Noor made light of the situation, stressing that his division has pledged full support for Chief Minister Musa Aman and that the division's election machinery is ready for the polls.

Hajiji, who is the Sabah local government and housing minister, said Umno and BN will never retreat in face of the opposition.

Chest thumping aside by the local leaders, it would appear the national deputy BN chief Muhyiddin Yassin is not taking things lightly.

He will be attending a breaking of fast event today hosted by the Sepanggar Umno division, which some local party activist say was meant to salvage moral cause by the expected desertion of Bumburing and Lajim.

Meanwhile, Musa called on state BN leaders not to get distracted by in-party politicking, and to focus on continuing the party's struggle for the people.

"We are not looking after our own political interests. What is more important is the interests of the people, for us to make sure that every development project and programme that we have planned and implemented would give maximum impact to the rakyat," he said.

Musa made the remarks when asked to comment on Bumburing's resignation as Tuaran BN division chairperson. He stressed that in-party politicking would serve BN no purpose and would only give more ammunition to the opposition.

He urged party leaders and members in Sabah to continue strengthening relationship and avoid actions that might only weaken the party.

Musa has also rejected speculation that problems brewing within Sabah BN may affect its preparation for the coming election, saying BN would go into the polls as a family.

"We are going to face the coming election as a family fuelled by the spirit of oneness and the resolve to win so we can continue the BN struggle for the people.

"There is too much politicking with the opposition already; let's not get distracted by in-party politicking, he said.

"I call on everyone to double up effort in serving the people. No doubt we will be facing challenges but we will triumph over them," he said.