

SUPP members demand exit from S'wak BN
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By Dukau Papau

Almost all the Central Committee (CC) members of the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) have demanded the party's exit from the state BN in order to stop being 'bullied' by remaining in the coalition.

"No comment," said party president Peter Chin (left), who looked sad and tired, when asked to verify that the demand had been made at a meeting yesterday at party headquarters.

He was also said to have been heavily criticised for his 'weak' leadership and lack of action against a 'rebel' faction led by Wong Soon Koh, who heads the Sibul branch.

"They can say I am a weak president. That is their opinion," Chin responded when asked.

A CC member, who declined to be named, claimed that the party has been "mistreated, ignored or sidelined" by the state BN led by Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud, ever since Chin was elected party president last December.

For instance, Taib had boycotted Chinese New Year events which he had never failed to attend while George Chan was president.

The member also claimed that Taib has allowed Wong (left) a free hand to appoint the Temenggong, Pemanca, Kapitan and political secretaries, among others, and that he has not referred such appointments to his party.

"Taib deliberately ignores Chin, who is not only the president of a Chinese-based party, but also a federal minister. Instead Taib gives Wong so much face and the 'power' to deal with the Chinese community even though he is not the president of the party," he said.

Some angry members walked out of yesterday's meeting when it failed to institute stern disciplinary action against the 'rebels', and only issued a warning.

Chin's inability to act is attributed to the fact that six of them are ministers, assistant ministers and elected representatives.

They are Jerip Susil (Assistant Minister of Public Health); Lee Kim Shin (Assistant Minister of Sports and Communications); Francis Harden (Assistant Minister of Rural Development); Ranum Mina (Opar state assemblyperson); Johnichal Rayong (Engkilili state assemblyperson); and Tiong Thai King (Lanang MP).

Following dissent over the party elections last December, they and Wong have not attended meetings and functions, but have allegedly acted against the party's interests.

Youth wing secretary-general Wilfred Yap, an observer at the meeting, called for "bold action against those who go against the interests of the party and those who sell their principles and souls".

Candidates endorsed

The CC adopted five resolutions, one of which was to endorse nominations for the upcoming parliamentary election in the state.

Tan Kai was nominated to contest the Bandar Kuching seat; Lo Khere Chiang and Wilfred Yap in Stampin; Richard Riot in Serian; Ding Kuong Hiing in Sarikei; Vincent Lau in Bandar Sibu; Tiong in Lanang and Sebastian Ting in Miri.

Chin told members that, despite a 'peace accord' between Wong and him because of the election, there were signs that lobbying activities had taken place in Sarikei and Miri.

"These activities are still going on even though the CWC has issued a warning to all party leaders and members not to carry out lobbying activities which go against the candidates proposed by the central leadership," he said.

"To do so will cause confusion to members and the public as to who is responsible for nominating candidates to contest the seven seats allocated to the party. In my view and it is also the view of the CWC members that there is a strong need to maintain discipline on such matters."

Chin also said it is a matter of priority for the party to defend its five seats of Serian, Stampin, Sarikei, Lanang and Miri, and to wrest back Bandar Kuching and Sibu which it lost to the DAP in 2008.

"Many have told me that to perform credibly during the next parliamentary election is a difficult task, one that requires party leaders and members from whichever camps to work together and in unison to ensure that we run the best campaign we can to get our voters to support BN.

"It is because of this that I have been very tolerant of what was said and done by some of our members as well as branch leaders and to refrain from taking drastic steps to enforce party discipline.

"I would like to caution such members and leaders to think of the future of our party and not to take things too far by saying and acting against (its) interests."