

Taib: Sarawakians rejected Global Witness' allegation

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Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud said the people of Sarawak have rejected the allegation of international corruption watchdog Global Witness against him through the democratic process in the recent general election.

According to Sin Chew Daily, Taib told the state assembly in his winding-up speech yesterday that Sarawak BN - led by himself - has won 25 out of 31 parliamentary seats in the state, obtaining more than two-thirds majority.

Not only that, three opposition candidates who have been accusing BN over native customary land issues, and have brought those disputes to the court, were defeated in the parliamentary constituencies of Limbang, Lubok Antu and Sri Aman, he added.

NONE" It meant that the people of Sarawak have completely rejected the false allegations by Global Witness, and that they are against and tired of the interference of outsiders into the independence and freedom of Sarawak people," he was quoted as saying.

In March, Global Witness had released a video expose of alleged corruption in the Sarawak timber industry by hiring an actor to pose as a foreign timber investor.

In the expose released simultaneously on broadcaster Al-Jazeera and Malaysiakini, the actor made video records of his conversation with close relatives - and self-professed confidants of Taib - who had allegedly offered him land still inhabited by natives and offered to show him how to cheat his way out of paying taxes.

The relatives of Taib were also depicted as being very dismissive of native rights.

Taib has since dismissed the conversations as "normal business discussions" by several individuals who had overstated their importance and relations to him to try and win business contracts from the actor involved.

According to national news agency Bernama, Taib in his speech has also given DAP's Kota Sentosa assembly person Chong Chieng Jen three months to apologise for uttering defamatory words against him.

Taib - who is also Sarawak finance minister as well as resource planning and

environment minister - said today that he would consider filing court proceedings against Chong unless the latter withdraws the defamatory allegations and duly apologises within the next three months.

"So long as there are Sarawakians like those in the opposition who persist in being willing tools for the dissemination of these false or exaggerated allegations, the state is at risk of becoming subservient to these foreign manipulators with potentially dire economic, social and political consequences," he alleged.

'Taking legal action against Chong'

He added that the state had already instituted legal action against Chong - who is also Sarawak DAP secretary - for defamation pertaining to what he said outside the august house on the state's budgetary and financial system to cause considerable damage to the government's reputation and integrity of its financial system.

In asking him to seriously reflect on the spirit of Sarawakian patriotism, Taib noted, through his abrasive style of politicking, the Kota Sentosa state assemblyperson not only lowered the dignity of the august institution, but also tried to create distrust among the people for those who had been legitimately given the mandate by the people to govern the state.

dap sibu ceramah 030513 chong chieng jen"By the manner Chong (left) continuously articulated his argument inside and outside this august house, based on the allegations in the foreign media and promoted by foreign organisations, he maliciously sought to achieve what he miserably failed to attain in the general election - to change the government," Taib, who is also state BN chief, said.

Notwithstanding the electorate's emphatic rejection of what was revealed in the Global Witness tapes, he said, DAP members - particularly Chong - had continued to refer to them as if they contained the gospel truth.

The opposition - especially the DAP - had disseminated these tapes and their contents, which led to opinions being expressed by individuals about how land for plantations had been alienated in Sarawak and the schemes by those who allegedly obtained such land to maximise quick profits and fraudulently avoided Malaysian tax, he stressed.

"Even a newly-qualified lawyer would understand that such illicitly procured evidence from unsuspecting third parties could not stand up to the basic standard of proof of guilt before a judicial tribunal against any person they were referring to," Taib said.

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