

Sarawak DAP goes into rural overdrive

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By Dukau Papau

Sarawak DAP has set aside close to RM600,000 to set up branches in 20 state constituencies as an effort to break the hegemony of BN in rural areas, said its chairperson Chong Chieng Jen.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the state committee meeting yesterday, he said: "The key to national reform or to 'ubah' (change) the political landscape in Sarawak will hinge on how we perform in the rural areas in the coming general election."

"If we can break the hegemony of BN in rural areas, then it will be a big step towards 'ubah' otherwise it will be one step backward," he added.

chong chieng jen interview 141108 01Chong (left) said the money for the rural drive came from contributions of the party's 13 state elected representatives whose allowances have been increased giving them a substantial amount of arrears.

"Following the increase of state assemblyperson's allowance to RM15, 000 backdated to January last year, each assemblyman had an arrears of RM178,000. Out of this, each one of us donated 25% (RM44,625) to the rural working committees.

"This is to show how serious we are in our rural drive," added the Kota Sentosa assemblyperson and MP for Bandar Kuching.

The state committee endorsed the formation of three rural working committees each catered for the southern, central and northern regions.

NONEHe said for the southern region, the party identified Tasik Biru, Bengoh, Kedup, Tarat, Balai Ringin, Simanggang, Engkilili and Bukit Saban where the party will set up branches and service centers.

The committee is headed by Leon Jimat Donald who will be assisted by a state assemblyperson.

Each representative from each of the state seats will also sit in the committee.

In the central region, the state seats include Pakan, Meluan, Ngemah, Katibas,

Pelagus, and Belaga. The committee is headed by Dr John Brian. He will be assisted by another state assemblyman in the area.

State seats of Kakus, Kemena, Marudi, Bekenu, Bukit Kota and Batu Danau will be under the northern region. The working committee is headed by Dr. Bob Langub. State rep Alan Ling will assist him.

Chong said the three committees have been given two months to set up branches in those state seats.

Overlapping claims

On the question of overlapping claims with its other Pakatan Rakyat partners PKR and PAS, Chong said: "Whether at the end of the day we will be fielding our candidates in the name of Pakatan Rakyat we will decide later after negotiation."

"What is the most important thing, I think, is that the political work has to be done now and somebody must do it.

"We need to start work now as there is so much work need to be done. We need to identify the problems in these constituencies.

azlan" So the setting up of our branches in these constituencies will increase our chances of victory in these areas in the coming election," he said, pointing out that the success to replace BN will depend much on Pakatan's performance in the rural constituencies.

Chong said that his confidence is based on feedback and the growing support of the rural people and the results of the last state and parliamentary general election.

In the 2011 state election, BN which regarded the rural constituencies as its "fixed deposit" won 53 rural seats out of 71 it contested. It only lost three rural seats of Krian, Pelagus and Ba'Kelalan.

In the urban constituencies, BN managed to win only one seat (Senadin) and semi-urban seat (Bawang Assan).

In the May general election, the opposition won six parliamentary seats which are urban areas while narrowly lost in some of the rural constituencies.

Sarawak has 31 parliamentary seats.

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