

**Taib tells leaders: Face smear campaign with courage**  
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Embattled Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud today sent a message to his fellow state leaders - be brave and fight "smear campaigns".

Taib, in office for 26 years, was recently implicated in a RM32 million timber kickback scandal.

Last week, Taib has threatened to sue malaysiakini for publishing a total of eight articles implicating him to the kickbacks.

Opening a parliamentary seminar for government backbenchers, the chief minister said that "we must be brave and fight any smear campaign". He also indicated that he would not hesitate to take the matter to court.

"Don't fear. We have to fight it out," he was quoted as saying by Star Online today.

Taib said politicians were today subjected to smear campaigns from their political rivals. The state BN coalition chairperson is also planning to sue PKR leaders in the state for distributing copies of the malaysiakini articles.

**Don't be afraid**

"I will show you that we can protect ourselves through the legal system," he said at the seminar held at the Santubong beach resort.

"So, don't be afraid. You must have a conviction to do what you have planned to do and do it according to your conscience," he added.

Taib added that even though the government "had done a lot for the people, they could still switch their support to the opposition if they failed to understand that the developments were for their benefits."

He said the old way of looking for precedents as a guide could no longer be valid as the state was venturing into new areas of development.

Citing an example, he said the state planned to develop the proposed Murum and Belaga hydro-electric dam projects in the upper Rejang Basin in central Sarawak to power energy-intensive industries, like the aluminium smelting plants.

The two-day seminar entitled "The role of political leaders: Integrity and development" was attended by Barisan MPs and assemblymen, political secretaries and senior government officers.

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