

Heat on S'wak PKR chief over seat allocation
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Negotiations on seat allocations for the upcoming Sarawak election are likely to foment more dissatisfaction in PKR with state chief Baru Bian.

Already allegedly facing a movement to oust him, Bian (left) - who was appointed last December - is also under a lot of pressure not to concede the choice urban seats to DAP.

The DAP has traditionally enjoyed Chinese urban support, he explained when contacted today.

"From our point of view, we feel that we will contest in the majority of the rural seats. We're not likely to get the Chinese-majority seats," he said.

While DAP may be a logical fit for urban constituencies, which make up about 20 percent of the 71 state seats, the argument is unlikely to sway PKR members.

This is because urban areas are relatively more accessible in Sarawak, and contesting in rural interior areas would be a costlier and logistically challenging venture.

However, Bian said PKR, which is likely to contest in more than 40 seats, has been active in the rural Dayak communities and has an added advantage in this respect.

"The sentiments are very strong towards us there and we are moving very fast into the rural areas," he said.

He also said Sarawak PKR will make it a point to raise funding issues at Pakatan Rakyat council meetings.

"Hopefully DAP will consider making contributions (as) campaigns (are now more costly)," he said.

Infighting ahead of elections

The rural headway, however, is not enough to impress his detractors who have claimed that Bian is not doing anything to make PKR's presence felt in urban Sarawak.

Asked to comment on this, he admitted that he is "unable to gauge the level of activity needed in urban areas" and has delegated it to branch and division leaders.

The relatively slow activity in Kuching was said to be the reason for the 'secret meeting' convened by state PKR adviser Hafsah Harun last week.

However, speculations about a more sinister motive are rife, with the 'secret meeting' said to be called to discuss a plot to oust Bian.

The meeting was also attended by deputy chairperson Wan Zainal Wan Senusi, another adviser Dominique Ng (left) and state leadership committee member Jimmy Donald.

While confirming that the meeting took place, Hafsah denied that it was a move to topple

the state chief.

Bian, however, has informed the central party leadership about the rumour.

"I have received information from credible sources (that there were discussions about changing leadership), and I have informed Kuala Lumpur about it. Let them decide what they want to do about it," he said.

The current Sawarak assembly term expires in July next year.

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