

'Selfish' PBB leaders do not want Umno in S'wak

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Certain top leaders of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), the state ruling coalition's backbone, are scared of Umno expanding to Sarawak as they worry it would adversely affect their personal and business interests, a protem branch chairperson claimed today.

The PBB leaders had tried to scare off people by suggesting that Sarawakians would lose their rights if Umno were allowed to expand its wings to the state, pointing out to what was already happening in Sabah where important policy decisions were made in Kuala Lumpur, he added.

"This scare tactic merely shows that they themselves are afraid of Umno coming in because they worry what they will lose in terms of their personal positions and business interests," the Tarat protem branch chairperson Major (R) Peter Runin told malaysiakini today.

Among some of the top PBB leaders who had in recent weeks scoffed at the idea of Umno's entry into the state were PBB deputy president and Deputy Chief Minister Alfred Jabu, PBB deputy president and state Housing Minister Abang Johari Tun Openg and PBB acting youth leader Abdul Rahman Hamzah and PBB supreme council member Idris Buang.

Karim was recently quoted by the local media as saying that Umno should not come to Sarawak without prior consultation with the state Barisan Nasional, especially PBB led by Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud.

ROS should take action

However, Taib has so far not commented publicly on the increasing activities of the so-called Umno promoters in Sarawak. The state Umno protem committee is said to be headed by a businessman in his forties Effendi Jeman.

Idris, one of Taib's close aides, was quoted in The Borneo Post as saying that the ROS should take action against the activities of the group in Sarawak since Umno deputy president Najib Tun Razak had declared that Umno had not given its consent to the group to set up branches and recruit members.

In the past weeks, while on a membership drive in Malay and Dayak areas, its supporters had flooded the areas with Umno flags, attracting a lot of attention, including from the media.

Abang Johari chided the group for their unsanctioned activities, saying the so called Umno supporters were flying the Umno flags 'for fun.' He had also described the group leaders as 'a bunch of jokers.'

Contacted today, Effendi Jeman said the PBB leaders were obviously worried about their personal and business interests, adding that this reporter should ask them 'why they are so worried about the idea of Umno coming to Sarawak.'

He said the group would continue to set up branches and recruit more members, adding that more than 100 branches have been set up, he added.

"It's the people's request (that they want Umno). I am not bothered at all (by the various statements from PBB leaders).

"Leaders are the people's choice. The mandate is from the people. Leaders who object to the people's request are not real leaders of the people. The people want Umno," Effendi declared.

Runin, formerly a supreme council member of the now defunct Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), told malaysiakini that when he was first approached to join the Umno supporters, he listened to what they had to say.

Other parties also keen

"I've found out that our struggle is the same, but where PBDS had failed I believe Umno because of its clout would succeed, especially in addressing injustices, such as on the native customary rights (NCR) land issue."

Runin himself has helped to set up half a dozen branches.

He said they were not deterred by Najib's denial statement, saying that it was significant that many other top Umno leaders have so far not said anything about it.

When contacted for his comments on Umno's plan for Sarawak, a senior Umno leader in Kuala Lumpur told malaysiakini: "I am not confirming nor denying it (spreading its wings to Sarawak)."

The aim is to set up as many branches as possible based on one branch for every polling districts in all the 71 state constituencies in the state. There are an average of eight polling districts in each constituency.

Meanwhile, Supp secretary-general Sim Kheng Hui said it would be natural for national-based political parties to want to spread their wings to Sarawak. He said there were also reports that the MCA and Gerakan are keen to expand to Sarawak.

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