

49 BN MPs off to Taiwan beginning today
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A total of 49 Barisan Nasional members of parliament will take part in a study tour to Taiwan beginning today with 41 leaving at 1.45 this afternoon while another eight will join them tomorrow.

BN Backbenchers Club (BBC) deputy chairperson Bung Mokhtar Radin - who left with the first group - confirmed this to Malaysiakini when contacted.

He said the whole group comprised 10 MPs from Sabah, 12 from Sarawak and the rest from Peninsular Malaysia.

The entourage is expected to carry out a detailed study of Taiwan's state-of-the-art agricultural programmes.

Bung said their schedule included visiting factories to study Taiwan's agricultural sector and derive knowledge from the methods used in enhancing local farming and cultivation techniques.

"Taiwan is an ideal location for the MPs to gain understanding on high-tech equipments and technologies, needed in improving Malaysia's agricultural industry," he said.

Bung, who is also the Kinabatangan MP, said their travel itinerary not only included factory tours but also dialogues and discussions with relevant Taiwanese authorities.

According to Bung, the MPs will be in Taiwan for eight days. It has been earlier reported that the excursion will be fully paid by the BBC - an organisation representing government MPs.

The timing of this study trip has come under question as it coincides with the Sept 16 deadline imposed by PKR leader Anwar Ibrahim for several BN MPs to crossover into Pakatan Rakyat.

Trip shows increasing panic

In a statement today, DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang hit out that the study excursion to Taiwan was intended to halt BN MPs from taking part in the upcoming "political changes".

raja petra court case 060508 lim kit siang"Despite maintaining a public stance of stoic indifference, there is no doubt that with the daily countdown to Sept 16, there is an increasing panic in Umno and BN leadership ranks over the degree of cohesion, solidarity and allegiance of the 75 BN backbenchers," he said.

"Some BN leaders are getting cold feet and more than a touch of panic," said Lim.

"All in all, it is a national shame that the MPs should be treated like delinquent children who have to be packed off overseas and secluded from mischief, treating the BN MPs as no better than chattel."

The Ipoh Timur MP also ticked off BBC chairperson Tiong King Sing for "hatching such a stupid idea".

"What makes Tiong and the leaders of Umno and BN think that by physically shipping two-thirds of the parliamentary backbenchers overseas and sequestering from any contact with Pakatan Rakyat until after Sept 16 the loyalty and allegiance of all the BN MPs are forever secured?" he asked.

"If there are BN MPs who are minded to leave BN ... nothing can stop them from proceeding with their fateful decisions any time after their return to Malaysia after Sept 16."

bung moktar tiong king sing 190408But Tiong (photo, right) defended the all-expenses paid holiday as an educational programme.

"It is not a forced trip. We are going to Taiwan to obtain some ideas on how to bolster our agriculture output. It has nothing to do with September 16. They can do what they want to do on that date," he told AFP.

The honourable option

According to Lim, the panic of BN leaders with the approach of '916' is also evident from the "increasingly intemperate and irrational" statements emanating from their ranks.

maximus johnity ongkiliAs an example, he cited the report in the New Sunday Times yesterday which quoted Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) deputy president and Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili (left) as condemning the move to overthrow the government through undemocratic means as 'evil'.

Commenting on this, Lim said: "I have always known Ongkili as a level-headed politician but it is reflection of the extreme pressures he and other leaders, whether PBS, Umno or BN, have been subject to by the '916' dateline, to make him use intemperate language."

"Ongkili should have known that the language of abuse like "evil" ... could be so easily used back against him as he had led PBS from the opposition into the BN in highly controversial circumstances."

The veteran politician said he fully agrees that Malaysian politics must be kept clean and there must be no room for elected representatives to be 'frog legislators' to defect for monetary gain or other material inducements - or to use Ongkili's words "a pot of political porridge".

"This is why DAP and I had maintained since the 70s that elected representative should resign if they want to defect, return the mandate to the voters to seek their approval in a by-election on a question of principle...

"This honourable option for an MP to resign and cause a by-election to seek a new mandate from the electorate to endorse his resignation or defection was closed in 1990 when the constitution was amended to bar any MP who resigns from his seat from standing for election for five years," he lamented.

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