

**BN will win 'comfortable majority' in polls, says Taib**  
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KUCHING - Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud is confident that the state Barisan Nasional (BN) will win with a "comfortable majority" in the upcoming state election.

However, when asked by reporters to quantify it, Taib, who is also state BN chairman, said, "Count the Bumiputera-majority seats.

"With the people's support, I believe we will have quite a comfortable majority, but I will be very sad if we form the next government without strong Chinese representation," he said at an Aidilfitri celebration, here, Thursday.

More than 3,000 people, largely Chinese, attended the gathering and his address was translated into Mandarin.

The Aidilfitri gathering was held at a hotel in conjunction with the opening of a new RM61.5 million dual carriageway from Stutong to the Sama Jaya Industrial Zone and Kuching International Airport.

When asked by reporters if the Chinese would reject the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), one of the state BN component parties, in the coming state election, Taib said: "I don't know. It's up to the Chinese to decide."

There are 71 seats in the state legislative assembly, out of which 56 are Bumiputera-majority seats and the other 15, Chinese-majority.

In the 2006 state election, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), the backbone of Sarawak BN, contested 35 seats, SUPP 19, Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) nine and Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) eight.

PBB won all 35 seats, SUPP 11, PRS eight and SPDP eight.

SUPP failed to retain eight seats, including four Chinese-majority seats – Pending, Batu Lintang, Padungan (all in Kuching), and Bukit Assek (Sibu). The three mixed constituencies it lost were Kota Sentosa (Kuching), Meradong (Bintangor), Kidurong (Bintulu). It also lost the predominantly-Iban seat of Engkilili (Sri Aman).

Taib appealed to the Chinese community to have a strong representation in the government to have a greater say.

He said every race in the state should be represented in the government as the government would always find ways to help the people to progress.

He urged the Chinese to think deeply over what would happen in future if they have no representatives in the government.

"Do you want to be the tormentors of the government or be part of the government?" he said.

Taib also said that his first pledge when he was sworn in as Chief Minister was to be a Chief Minister for all races in the state. - Bernama

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