

Abang Johari Defends Taib's Succession Plan
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KUCHING -- Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) has denied opposition allegations that its president and Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud's decision to quit after the state election was insincere as no date was mentioned.

PBB deputy president Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg said there were no need to announce the quit date or time frame of the succession plan as the process of grooming leaders to take over the new state administration needed proper planning, without outside interference.

"He (Abdul Taib) knows what to do," he told reporters after opening a 'meet the people' session in the Pending state constituency, which was jointly organised by the information ministry's special affairs department, Pending PBB and Pending Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) at Sekolah Menengah Kerajaan (SMK) Pending hall here today.

Yesterday, Abdul Taib, for the first time, broke his silence on his retirement plans when he announced that the coming 10th state election would be his last before handing over the baton to his successor.

His announcement was however, met with sceptism by the opposition.

Many (in the opposition) questioned his sincerity in blogs and online news portals as the nation's longest-serving chief minister stopped short of naming his successor and refused to disclose the exact time he would step down from his post which he has held for three decades.

In addition to the various opposition allegations over the internet, there were also fears among PBB loyalists that there would likely be a scramble for key positions within the party which has long been the bedrock of the state Barisan Nasional for over 30 years.

It has been reported that apart from Abang Johari, the party's senior vice-president who is state second resource planning and management minister Awang Tengah Ali Hassan, is among the front-runners for the party's succession plans.

Earlier in his speech, Abang Johari, who is state housing and urban development minister, explained the decision to nominate world-renowned cardiologist Prof Dr Sim Kui Hian as SUPP and BN candidate for the Chinese-majority seat of Pending.

"Please evaluate the performance of your (Pending) elected representative for the past five years because we (BN) cannot do anything if you keep complaining as the constituency is under the opposition," he said.

Dr Sim, whose father was the late Sim Kheng Hong, a former deputy chief minister, will likely face the petite but outspoken lawyer Violet Yong, of the DAP, who is the incumbent for the seat.

(Bernama)

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