

**SUPP delegates to elect president for the first time**  
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KUCHING: Historic. That best describes the Sarawak United Peoples' Party's triennial delegates' conference from today to Sunday, which will see for the first time an election to choose a president in its 52-year history.

Previously, the post was won through consensus. But an intense fight is on the cards this time around.

The event starts today with the youth and women assemblies being held at two locations concurrently.

Tomorrow, the central committee will meet over two main issues -- the amendment of the party constitution to allow direct election for important party posts, such as the president, and to limit the tenure of office-bearers as well as elected representatives, including ministers.

The opening ceremony will be held on Saturday where Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Najib Razak will be present.

The party election is on Sunday. The first tier involves the election of the central committee members by 600 delegates.

The second is where the newly elected 131 central committee members will nominate and vote among themselves the 23 office-bearers, including the president.

Once nominated, a simple majority will ensure a win.

With the two party heavyweights, organising secretary Datuk Seri Peter Chin and deputy secretary-general Datuk Seri Wong Soon Koh contesting for the presidency, it has been expected that Sunday will be "a long day".

Out-going SUPP secretary-general Datuk Sim Kheng Hui said the counting of votes might run late into the night.

Since Chin announced his candidacy, the run-up to the election has been filled with accusations of foul play and irregularities at branch elections.

The tactics deployed by the two candidates will determine the winner. The two rallies which took place on Nov 28 have been used to gauge their effectiveness.

Party sources have described Chin's campaign as rather "moderate" compared with the more "lavish" events organised by Wong.

Although the turnout at Wong's functions was larger than that of Chin's, this is no indication of who is going to win the battle.

A senior SUPP leader said: "A big turnout is not an indication of the results. Of those who turned out to hear Chin, a majority were delegates, compared with ordinary members who were seen at Wong's functions."

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