

SUPP TDC To Go Ahead As Planned, Says Dr Chan
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KUCHING, Dec 9 (Bernama) -- The Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) triennial delegates' conference (TDC), scheduled for tomorrow and Sunday, will proceed as planned despite boycott threats by the team aligned to one of the presidential candidates, Datuk Seri Wong Soon Koh.

Outgoing President Tan Sri Dr George Chan said today that SUPP's central committee (CC), the party's highest authority, confirmed that the election committee had conducted branch elections in accordance with the party constitution and had not violated any rules in the process.

"We will convey this to the Registrar of Societies (ROS), that the CC has looked into the complaints and rectified some of them," he told a news conference after chairing his last CC meeting as president at SUPP headquarters here.

Also present was the other presidential candidate, party organising secretary Datuk Seri Peter Chin.

Dr Chan said any postponement, as demanded by Wong and his supporters to enable claims of irregularities at branch elections to be resolved, was against the party constitution, since it might lead to SUPP being deregistered.

In spite of the absence of Wong, who is also SUPP deputy secretary-general, and party leaders aligned to him -- including Lanang Member of Parliament (MP) Datuk Tiong Thai King and state assemblymen Datuk Francis Harden Hollis (Simanggang), Datuk Lee Kim Shin (Senadin), Dr Jerip Susil (Bengoh), Ranum Mina (Opar) and Dr Johnical Rayong Ngipa (Engkilili) -- he said he was very happy that the meeting ran smoothly.

However, Serian MP Datuk Richard Riot Jaem, who has declared himself neutral, was present at the meeting, which saw 69 out of its 126 members in attendance.

Asked if any action would be taken against Wong and his supporters, who had threatened not only to boycott, but would also stage a large protest and demonstration during the TDC as well as resign en bloc, Dr Chan said the matter was not discussed at the meeting.

He was, however, confident that they would not resign en bloc, though he said that it was the Barisan Nasional (BN) principle that their seats would remain with SUPP should they decide to do so.

Regarding speculation that Wong's group was planning to form a new political party, Dr Chan said he was not aware of it.

Asked if Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who was expected to open the TDC tomorrow, has given any advice, especially on the latest development, he said the BN national chairman would like to see a united SUPP.

"There will be differences in any party...sometimes there are a bit of hiccups here and there, as this is the first time we have direct party elections, so the rules were never put into use before," he said.

The meeting also approved amendments to the party constitution to limit those holding the post of president to only three terms, or nine years, and federal and state ministerial posts to two terms, he said.

He added that the posts of senators, political secretaries and councillors would also be limited to two terms to "give a chance to the young people to express their voices".

"My wish is to see a new vigorous team to take SUPP into the next decade with new leaders, new lines of thought and new ways of doing things," he added.

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