

## **Another Dayak Party In Sarawak?**

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**By Alan Ting**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 21 (Bernama) -- It could be a case of history repeating itself for another Dayak-based party if leaders now facing disciplinary action leave and form a new political organisation?

The spotlight is now on the Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party whose president, Tan Sri William Mawan Ikom, has decided to refer eight leaders to the SPDP disciplinary committee because of always being absent from supreme council meetings.

They are senior vice president Datuk Peter Nansian, vice-president Sylvester Entrie Muran and supreme council members Datuk Dr Tiki Lafe, Paulus Gumbang, Rosey Yunus, Peter Gani, George Garai and Eda Igar.

Entrie is Sarawak assistant minister of public utilities and state assemblyman for Marudj, Dr Tiki is the Mas Gading Member of Parliament, Gumbang is the state assemblymen for Batu Danau, and Rosey the state assemblyman for Bekenu.

The SPDP disciplinary committee, chaired by professor Dr Shafiq Abdullah, has been given 30 days to investigate why the eight had been absent from the meetings and report its findings to the supreme council.

Many political analysts believe that the SPDP, which is part of the Barisan Nasional, may be heading for a split and a new Dayak political party could emerge as a result.

"It always starts with disciplinary action, followed by sacking or a breaking away, and a new party emerges," said political analyst Dr Jeniri Amir of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

He said the now defunct Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak emerged after a split in SNAP, the Sarawak National Party, and later Parti Rakyat Sarawak was established as a result of the internal tussle in PBDS.

"The same goes for SPDP, which was set up following a tussle in SNAP. It is likely that the circle or history will repeat itself," Jeniri added.

PBDS was established in 1983 by the then Datuk Amar (now Tan Sri) Dr Leo Moggie after leaving SNAP. The party was dissolved after an internal crisis that led to its de-registration in December 2003.

Subsequently, Parti Rakyat Sarawak led by Tan Sri Dr James Jemut Masing was formed while SPDP was founded in the wake of the de-registration of SNAP in November 2002 by a faction aligned to Tan Sri William Mawan Ikom.

"If SPDP fails, you can see a new party coming up. Therefore, Mawan has to be very careful as these senior party leaders have their own support," Jeniri said.

Another political analyst from the same university, Dr Awang Azman Awang Pawi, noted that Mawan was SNAP vice-president when the then president of the party, Datuk Amar

James Wong, sacked him and several other leaders for allegedly causing a division.

"This happened in 2002 and it caused the 41-year-old party to be de-registered. It was only in 2010 that the de-registration of SNAP was declared null and void by the court.

"It is not impossible for SPDP to end up like SNAP," he said.

Party insiders said the crisis in SPDP had been going on for two years despite attempts to patch up differences in July this year. This was when Mawan, who is Sarawak Social Development and Urbanisation Minister, met Nansian and Enteri.

The party crisis contributed to the loss of SPDP seats in Krian and Ba'Kelalan in the April 16 Sarawak election.

"The situation seems to be improving after that but it heated up again later when Mawan openly said that he will use his presidential powers to take action against those creating factionalism in the party.

"Even though he did not name names, it was obvious who he was referring to," an insider said.

According to the insider, Mawan knew that some supporters of these leaders had demanded that they either form a new "BN-friendly party" or challenge Mawan in the next SPDP election.

Talk of a new party has gained currency in the Sarawak dailies which reported that the Registrar of Societies in Sarawak had confirmed that it had received four applications to register new parties, and one of them was said to be linked to some SPDP members.

"This really makes him (Mawam) angry. That's why he believes that time has come for him to act, otherwise factionalism at the highest level will continue to exist and hamper party unity," the insider said.

However, talk of a break away had been dismissed by SPDP deputy secretary-general Paul Igai.

"What actually happened is that these issues have been dragging on for too long. Some form of action has to be taken. We want to tell them (the eight senior leaders) that we are serious, no more playing around. Stop all this fiasco," he said.

Igai said if these leaders wanted to break away to form a new party, there was nothing that can stop them.

However, another political analyst at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Dr Ahi Sarok, did not believe that the eight leaders would be sacked from the party.

"Mawan is a diplomatic person. If he starts to expel these people, who is going to take over? Will they have enough support? In Mas Gading, for example, you can expel Dr Tiki and replace him with somebody else. The question is whether that somebody will have the support of the people in that parliamentary constituency,"

"I believe that Mawan can solve the internal problems without sacking anyone as what is most important for the party is to win in the next general election," Ahi Sarok said.

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