

**SUPP Still Facing Herculean Task To Patch Up**  
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**By Alan Ting**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- Newly elected Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) president Datuk Seri Peter Chin Fah Kui will make several announcements on Friday as part of the party's transformation plans since he took over the party presidency last month.

However, questions remain if the group headed by former presidential candidate Datuk Seri Wong Soon Koh is willing to patch up and put aside their differences after it decided to boycott the party election, complaining of irregularities.

The group has lodged a complaint with the Registrar of Societies (ROS), alleging irregularities in the party election at the branch level prior to the party's triennial delegates' conference (TDC) last year.

While ROS is still investigating the complaint, Chin's group has extended the olive branch to Wong's group -- first, when newly elected deputy president Datuk Richard Riot said he was willing to relinquish his position in the party in order to accommodate the leaders from Wong's group. But this was turned down.

Chin also invited Wong's group to attend this Friday's Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting, but this was turned down as well by the group, as they want to wait for the ROS' decision before deciding on their next move.

Some political analysts feel the two groups are unlikely to patch up their differences unless there is direct intervention from the Barisan Nasional (BN) top leadership.

"It's not easy for people who have split up to come back together, unless there is super willingness to work together. This has actually happened previously to parties such as SNAP and PBDS, otherwise, it is difficult," said political analyst Stanley Bye Kadam Kiai of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas).

He said the effort to reconcile was harder than previously thought, as Wong's group consists mostly of state assemblymen and a member of parliament whom he said, "hold the bargaining power that dictates terms".

The group comprises Wong, who is Bawang Assan assemblyman, five other assemblymen, Datuk Lee Kim Shin (Senadin), Datuk Francis Harden Hollis (Simanggang), Dr Jerip Susil (Bengoh), Ranum Mina (Opar) and Dr Johnical Rayong Ngipa (Engkilili), and Lanang MP Datuk Tiong Thai King.

"At the moment, it is really a hopeless case, unless they can talk together. Those six elected assemblymen are in a better position to make a deal because they can join another party if Chin's group does not want to compromise," Stanley said.

Party insiders point out that should the two sides continue quarrelling, it will be hard for the 50-year-old Chinese-dominated party to retain the seats allocated to the party and it will

also be much harder to wrest the seats that it has lost.

"If the two factions do not reconcile and continue to go their separate ways, it will be the end of SUPP," an insider told Bernama.

SUPP were given seven parliamentary seats -- Serian, Stampin, Bandar Kuching, Sibul, Lanang, Sarikei and Miri. Two of them, Bandar Kuching and Sibul, are in the hands of opposition party, DAP.

Some grassroots party members claim that Chin and his new team have not made any serious attempt to heal the wounds resulting from the heated tussle for posts during the branch elections.

They say Chin has not tried to get in touch with the rival faction.

However, an analyst at Institute of East Asian Studies, Unimas, Dr Awang Azman Awang Pawi said the two factions could patch up if Wong's group didn't play "hard to get".

"But I don't think they can patch things up. The top state and national BN leadership will eventually have to intervene and resolve the issue.

"Should this also fail, the SUPP being de-registered following complaints of irregularities in the branch elections last month is likely to happen," he said.

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