

**The Complexity Of Starting A BN Supporters Club**  
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**By Alan Ting**

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 9 (Bernama) -- An attempt to form a Barisan Nasional (BN) Supporters Club in Sarawak by five assembly members who have either been sacked by Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) or quit the party has highlighted the complexity of such move.

While some BN leaders are concerned about it, there are others who think that this arrangement represents the best way for BN to solve internal problems affecting some BN parties in Sarawak, especially with the general election expected to be called anytime between now and March 2013.

As pointed out by SPDP Lambir division chief Stewart Aying, BN does not want to rock the boat simply by announcing that these incumbents are now outside of BN.

"First, BN needs leaders to disburse minor rural project funds. Who can handle this better than the incumbents?

"Secondly, if BN announces now that these incumbents are now outside of BN, the coalition will technically be losing its elected representatives.

"BN still needs them to support its policies during the debates in the State Legislative Assembly and Parliament," he was quoted as saying by a local Sarawak newspaper.

However, Stewart believes that the crucial time will be during the nomination day because the coalition would have to decide whether it should allow "supportive" candidates from such club to represent it.

Should the BN supporters clubs are approved, then nothing can stop dissenting members of component parties from forming clubs every time they are unhappy with their parties' leaderships, he added.

Stewart argued that the formation of such clubs would only open the floodgates and set a bad precedent for the BN, a coalition of 13 political parties.

Some leaders within the coalition believe that circumstances may require that such clubs be formed in Sarawak.

"For (the sake of) political stability, it's a good thing; instead of allowing them to become opposition, it's better that they continue to support us," veteran politician and Selangor BN information chief Datuk Yap Pian Hon told Bernama.

"I'm not encouraging people to do this, but under the current circumstances, this (perhaps) provides the way forward for compromise in the hope that we can get more votes in the election.

"Rather than letting them join the opposition, it's better to let those who have been sacked by their parties to form such club," he said.

Gerakan deputy president Datuk Chang Ko Youn pointed out that such an arrangement was not new, citing the case in Perak where several independent assembly members adopted a BN-friendly approach.

"As BN supporters, you have more freedom to organise activities. I have seen examples in Perak where they organise public awareness campaigns that benefit the people," he said.

However, he said that such club should only be for non-BN members and not for people who were currently members of BN component parties.

This was clearly spelled out when BN amended its constitution to allow for direct membership as well as "associate" and "affiliate" memberships in 2010.

LDP president Datuk V.K. Liew explained that the amendment was made with certain guidelines and one of them was that anyone wishing to be an associate or affiliate member must not belong to any party.

Another condition is that only a member of a component party can be a BN candidate in an election.

"Probably after two or three years, if they feel that politics is the way for them, or if they want to become a candidate, they might join a component party," Liew said.

Party insiders pointed out that the formation of BN Supporters Club in Sarawak is likely bring out several outcomes.

First, those who had been sacked from their party may be nominated to defend their seats.

There could be a possibility that the BN may use a formula it employed in the 1983 state election to solve problems between Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), both components of BN.

In that formula, both parties were allowed to use their own symbols to contest against each other, even though both were BN components in the disputed constituencies. This was after PBDS, which broke away from SNAP, demanded to contest in 16 state seats, while SNAP strongly opposed such a demand.

SNAP and PBDS won eight seats each, all of which had remained with the BN.

Secondly, it could set a precedent, with people running to the BN Supporters Club whenever they have problems with their own parties.

What then is their chance of being renominated as candidates?

This could come under a formula, like the one implemented by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the 1990s in which two partyless candidates -- Datuk Billy Abit Joo in Hulu Rejang and Datuk Joseph Salang in Julau -- were allowed to represent the BN. Both won their respective seats.

Whatever the outcome, a political analyst at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Dr Sivamurugan

Pandian, said the most important task for the promoters of the BN Supporter Club in Sarawak is to define its role.

"How should it be different from any BN component party? If you are sacked from a component party, how can you continue to play a supportive role in BN? If those people want to contest, how can this be resolved?" he asked.

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