

Sarawak Workers Party debuts
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KUCHING: The emergence of the newly registered Sarawak Workers Party (SWP) shows that democratic practices are embraced in Sarawak, said Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud yesterday.

"One more party coming in, why not?" said Taib to reporters yesterday when asked on the formation of SWP.

Taib, who is Sarawak Barisan Nasional chairman, said it was up to the people to choose what party they wanted. "The party (SWP) has the freedom to contest in any area it deems fit."

Meanwhile, sources claimed that SWP is not a new party but the revival of the Parti Barisan Rakyat Sabah with a new name and also a new party constitution.

Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) president Tan Sri Dr James Masing said he would not consider SWP a threat but like any other opposition party, he would handle them seriously.

"We will take their challenge seriously like any other opposition party but we are confident that we can fight them off.

"I don't think it is a threat.

"It only has nuisance value and that is a problem.

"It will complicate situations in the next general election as people will be confused by it as their (SWP candidates) will declare that they have the the approval of the federal government," said the Land Development Minister, when contacted.

Talk has it that Datuk Sng Chee Hua, known to be Masing's arch-rival, would be SWP's de-facto leader. Masing and Sng, former Julau member of parliament from 1995 to 1999, have gone a long way back since 1983 when they were Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak leaders.

At the wake of PBDS's de-registration in 2002 due to party internal strife, Masing and Sng formed PRS with Masing as president and Sng as the deputy president.

Sng gradually faded into the background, and passed his leadership baton to his son Larry Sng who was expelled by Masing in 2009 for challenging Masing's leadership.

Larry was also not fielded to defend his Pelagus sate seat in the last state election in April 2011.

SWP's pro-tem deputy president George Lagongsaid they have yet to decide on the seats to contest.

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