

Taib To Seek Audience With Sarawak Head Of State On Saturday

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KUCHING, Feb 10 (Bernama) -- Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said today he would seek an audience with Sarawak Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Abang Muhammad Salahuddin Abang Barieng on Saturday to convey his intention to step down as the chief minister of Sarawak.

He said he needed to follow protocol in proceeding with his plan to step down from the post that he had held for the last 33 years.

"There is no hurry. I look forward to doing something useful for the country at a leisurely pace (after retiring as the chief minister)," he told reporters after officiating at the state-level Rela (People's Volunteer Corps) Day celebration, here.

Seeking an audience with the Yang Dipertua Negeri was among "the several more steps" that he said yesterday he needed to take before he officially retired.

"I've got to do things in a proper sequence," said Taib, who is also the president of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) and chairman of Sarawak Barisan Nasional (BN).

When asked yesterday whether he would step down by the end of this month, Taib had jokingly replied: "Yeah ... I think so ... so that I get (my) full salary for February."

Meanwhile, Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi told reporters that a closed-door meeting held at Taib's office earlier today had not discussed specifically on security preparations for a possible early state elections in Sarawak.

"It was to discuss the general security in Sarawak, and this meeting was planned well before this speculation (of Taib's imminent retirement)," he said.

Sarawak Second Minister of Resource Planning and Environment Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan said the "general political scenario" in Sarawak was discussed at the meeting.

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