

PAS veep challenged to contest in Batu Pahat
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Following PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub's announcement that he will contest in Johor in the next general election, Umno's Mohd Puad Zarkashi has challenged him to contest in Batu Pahat.

Dr Puad Zarkashi (right) won the Batu Pahat parliamentary seat - the birthplace of Umno and its stronghold ever since - with a substantial majority of 12,704 votes in 2008.

"If he is brave enough, come and contest in Batu Pahat. He is welcome because we are confident he won't succeed," Puad reportedly told Malay daily Sinar Harian in Senai yesterday.

The Umno supreme council member and deputy education minister said he sympathises with Salahuddin who has been 'forced to find a seat in Johor because he is no longer accepted by the Kelantan people'.

Salahuddin, who hails from Johor but was elected as the MP for Kubang Kerian, Kelantan, in the last general polls, had confirmed last Friday that he has accepted an invitation from Johor PAS to contest in the southern state.

He had revealed that he is considering three parliamentary constituencies - Batu Pahat, Pulai and Tanjong Piai.

However, he will decide later whether to contest in state or parliamentary seat, or at both levels in the three areas.

"NONE" "Tanjong Piai is my home town; Batu Pahat was where I lived before, while Pulai was where I studied and I have many friends there," Salahuddin (left) had been quoted as saying

"There is no problem for me to contest in any of these seats. All these seats seem attractive to me."

Batu Pahat PKR division chief and central leadership council member Syed Hamid Ali, the younger brother of former PKR deputy president Syed Husin Ali, is tipped to contest Muar - a mixed parliamentary seat - in the next polls.

MCA's Tanjong Piai MP Wee Jock Seng said Salahuddin's 'aggressive' move to Johor will not affect BN's status in the state.

"We (BN) have taken good care of our areas the people can evaluate and make the right choice," he said.

'No Chinese MB' pledge

In a related development, Salahuddin announced that PAS will contest 30 of the 56 state seats in Johor.

This is seen as a move to quash BN's allegation that a Chinese leader from DAP will be appointed menteri besar, should Pakatan Rakyat capture the state.

The remaining 26 seats will be divided equally between PKR and DAP, he said according to a report by Chinese daily Nanyang Siang Pau.

Of the 30 seats, Salahuddin explained during a ceramah in Segamat, two will be contested by non-Muslims on a PAS ticket.

" (As such) BN's allegation that supporting Pakatan will result in a Chinese menteri besar is untrue, irresponsible and misleading. The state constitution states that the post must be held by a local Malay. Johor Chinese (already know this)."

Batu Pahat is one of the four 'black seats' for BN in Johor according to the information ministry.

A celebration to mark Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's three years in office will be held at the Batu Pahat stadium on Saturday. Some 50,000 people are expected to attend the event, which will be broadcast live on television.

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