

Star wants Pakatan to stay out of Sabah
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By David Thien

Sabah State Reform Party (Star) has given the clearest indication yet that its doors for negotiation are shut to Pakatan Rakyat, by urging them to stay out of the state during the upcoming general election.

Speaking at a tea party function in Kota Kinabalu today, Star chairperson Jeffrey Gapani Kitingan said PKR and DAP, the Pakatan Rakyat components most active in Sabah, do not have the interests of Sabahans at heart and are not acting in their best interests.

"I believe that if their intention is just to topple BN and take helm of Putrajaya, and not actually fighting for the good of the Sabah's people," he said.

Jeffrey said that Star intended to field candidates in 37 state and 17 parliamentary seats. There are 60 state and 25 parliamentary seats in the state.

Pakatan Rakyat and its allies - Angkatan Perubahan Sabah and Pakatan Perubahan Sabah - are currently in talks with Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP). The plan is to share seats six ways, but talks are slow because SAPP wants the lion's share of the seats.

On the other hand there is Star, which has been highly critical of the better organised and experienced Pakatan, and thus was excluded from seat distribution negotiations.

Fielding professionals

Jeffrey said that Star was firm on the number of seats it will be contesting but will be willing to give way to local opposition parties SAPP and United Sabah National Organisation (Usno) in certain areas if they could fare better.

It is believed that Jeffrey is considering the contesting in Bingkor state seat, which he lost by a mere 141 votes during the 2008 general election when he stood as a PKR candidate. There were 293 votes for the two independent candidates.

Another seat being eyed by Jeffrey is the Keningau parliamentary seat currently held by his elder brother Joseph Pairin. Jeffrey had stood for the same seat in 2008 as well and put up a respectable challenge. Joseph Pairin held on to the seat with a 17 percent majority.

Jeffrey's other option is Pensiangan, currently held by Joseph Kurup. Kurup is the natural resources and environment deputy minister and president of the United Sabah People's Party (PBRS). He won the seat in 2008 uncontested.

Meanwhile, Star secretary Guande Kohoi said the party will be fielding many professionals

as candidates.

Among others, Kohoi said that Star women's chief Melanie Annol, a former banker, will likely be fielded against Upko president Bernard Dompok in Penampang.

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