

## **BN-Pakatan straight fights in nine Sabah seats**

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**By Aidila Razak**

After much wrangling and negotiations, opposition parties in Sabah have only managed to stay out of each others' way in a handful of seats in the Borneo state.

Barring Independent candidates, Sabah will see straight fights between Pakatan Rakyat and BN in just four parliamentary seats and five state assembly seats.

This follows announcements by local parties SAPP and Star that it will stay out of these states and parliamentary constituencies.

Among those facing a concerted challenge by the opposition are LDP president VK Liew (above) in Sandakan and Sabah Umno chief Musa Aman in Sungai Sibuga.

Liew, despite feeling confident, is likely to be hanging on by his fingernails, having won in 2008 by a majority of only 176, despite opposition votes split between PKR and DAP.

Star holding back announcing several seats

Musa, who is also caretaker chief minister, however, is in a more comfortable position, having won with a formidable 7,657 votes ahead of now Sabah PKR chief Thamrin Jaini who garnered less than half of that.

The following are the seats where straight fights are expected:

Parliament:

Kota Kinabalu: Chin Teck Ming (BN) vs Jimmy Wong (DAP)

Beluran: Ronald Kiandee (BN) vs James Miki (PKR)

Batu Sapi: Linda Tsen (BN) vs Hamzah Abdullah (PAS)

Sandakan: VK Liew (BN) vs Stephen Wong (DAP)

State assembly:

Sulaman: Hajiji Noor (BN) vs Mukhtar (PKR)

Sungai Sibuga: Musa Aman (BN) vs Irwansyah Mustafa Ahmad (PKR)

Merotai: Pang Yuk Ming (BN) vs Ahmad Dollah (PAS)

Tanjong Batu: Hamisa Samad (BN) vs Fatmawaty Mohd Yusuf (PAS)

Sebatik: Muis Pichu (BN) vs Daud Jalaluddin (PAS)

The actual number of seats which will see BN take on Pakatan head on come nomination day tomorrow may be even fewer than listed above as Star has held back on announcing candidates in several seats yesterday.

Four party-clash in 20 seats

Speaking to reporters after launching the party's manifesto at Ming Garden Hotel yesterday, Star chief Jeffrey Kitingan (right) said that it could not make a full announcement as there is "fluidity".

This includes interest from those from Pakatan and BN who were approaching Star to pledge their support.

Meanwhile, Pakatan, Star, SAPP and BN will clash in three parliamentary seats and 17 state seats.

This includes Kota Marudu, contested by PBS deputy president and caretaker federal minister Maximus Ongkili.

He garnered 54 percent of the votes in 2008, ahead of PKR's Anthony Mandiau and an Independent candidate.

In 2008, the opposition garnered more votes compared to the BN in eight seats - Sandakan, Luyang, Likas, Bingkor, Inanam, Kapayan, Kuala Penyu and Merotai.

However, these seats went to BN due to multi-cornered fights among the many players in Sabah's crowded political scene.

Star's Jeffrey dismissed suggestions that Star's decision to contest 55 state seats and 24 parliamentary seats (with its ally Usno) will hand easy victory to the BN.

"Other parties are merely participating, but we are serious in reducing the BN government's hold. We are sure of this with each development," he said.

"Don't be obsessed with one -to-one (fights). It is only a concept. People will concentrate at the party they feel can win."

Sabah DAP equally 'Sabahan'

Meanwhile, faced with a barrage of onslaughts from the SAPP, DAP today said that their fight is not with the local parties.

Stressing that the Sabah DAP chapter, established in 1978, is equally Sabahan as SAPP and Star, it said that what it is offering is a more holistic approach to fulfilling the Borneo agenda.

Sabah DAP chief Jimmy Wong (left) said that that history has shown that Sabah-based parties did not stand up to federal powers.

As such, he said it is best to take a different approach by voting in a federal government which will treat Sabah better.

"We are saying that to save Sabah, you have to save Malaysia," he told reporters at the party headquarters at Kota Kinabalu.

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