

Richard Riot shoots down SUPP-SPDP merger move
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The talk of merger between the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) and the Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) as espoused by SUPP president Peter Chin and SPDP deputy president Tiong King Sing has been shot down by SUPP deputy president Richard Riot.

A local daily claimed that Chin and Tiong had told Home Affairs Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi that SUPP and SPDP were eager to merge as long as the authorities did not cancel SUPP's registration.

SUPP's fate is now in the hands of the Registrar of Societies (ROS) after the party was found to have committed irregularities in its party election in December 2011.

"I am against the merger between the two parties, and so are members of my branch," said the sixth-term MP for Serian and also the Human Resources Minister.

"When I read it in the papers, I was very furious, and my face got more wrinkles. Whether there is any truth in it, you have to ask Peter Chin and Tiong. Only the two of them can answer your question," said Richard when asked to comment about the proposed merger.

"As far as I and my branch are concerned, we don't want a merger. We have discussed it already at our meeting," he added.

Other than the Serian branch, other branches or leaders in SUPP have not responded to the merger talk, while SPDP leaders have welcomed it as a positive step.

Richard felt hurt that he was not consulted on such a serious matter as this even though he is the deputy president of the party.

"As the deputy president, I feel sorry for the party, because in the first place, for serious matters such as this, members of the central working committee (CWC) should have been informed.

'The party is relevant'

"Why should we merge with SPDP, because we know that SUPP will one day become strong again, that is when Richard Riot becomes the president of the party?" he said.

"The party is relevant, and they (voters) will return the party into its past glory," he added.

There has also been talk of SUPP merging with MCA and Gerakan, but so far no concrete action had been taken.

On the party's triennial general meeting (TGM) towards the end of this year, Richard said: "Seriously, I am offering myself as a neutral candidate for the post of party's president for the coming triennial general meeting (TGM) scheduled at the end of this year, if the two factions in the party (one led by Peter Chin and the other by SUPP Sibu Branch chairperson Wong Soon Koh) cannot reconcile.

“They cannot see eye to eye with each other, and how they can reconcile?”

“I believe I am the saviour of the party by contesting as a neutral candidate,” he said, asking party members to give him one term to build the party into a formidable force.

“I know the majority members of the party are Chinese. But the party does not belong to the Chinese alone. It is a multi-racial party,” he said, pointing out that he was not happy with the bickering in the party.

SUPP’s problem, he said, was due to many aged members who still wanted to cling to party posts despite being defeated in the general election.

“We should encourage more young people to be the frontliners,” Richard lamented.

Meanwhile, two SPDP leaders welcomed the SUPP-SPDP merger if it is for the good of the people, but pointed out that it must be done properly.

SPDP secretary-general Nelson Balang Rining said that if the merger is to provide better services to the people, strengthening BN’s power through consolidation, unity and harmony and remaining the trust of Sarawakians especially among the Chinese community towards BN, why not?

“It is a good idea, and we should support it,” he was quoted as saying.

Likewise, SPDP Youth leader Robert Ayu supported the merger proposal, if it could strengthen BN.

“We see nothing wrong with it if we have consensus and sincerity amongst partners. We must not be too apprehensive of the path untraveled,” he said.

Olive branch to G5

Apparently in anticipation of the SUPP-SPDP merger, SPDP president William Mawan had asked the expelled leaders and assemblypersons of the group of five (G5) to return to the party in order to strengthen it.

“Let bygones be bygones and they can apply to rejoin the party.

“The chief minister has asked us to reunite and reconsolidate ourselves. We are responding to that as there is no other way which way we can go,” said Mawan, who is the Social Development Minister.

The G5 comprises four assemblypersons namely Peter Nansian (Tasik Biru), Silvestre Entri (Marudi), Paulus Palu Gumbang (Batu Danau) and Rosey Yunus (Bekenu). The fifth member is the former MP for Mas Gading, Tiki Lafe.

They were sacked from the party between November 2011 and January 2012 for insubordination, and have remained partyless.