

## **SPDP and PRS chiefs welcome merger talks**

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Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) chief William Mawan welcomed the idea of reviving talks on the merger of SPDP and Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) soon as proposed by his PRS counterpart Larry Sng.

Commenting on the issue in Sng's presence during a Gawai Dayak visit, Mawan, who is also a state minister, said the talks would proceed as soon as Sng's position as party president is legitimised by the Registrar of Societies (ROS).

The talks were temporarily put in abeyance before the last state election in May 2006 following a leadership tussle in PRS.

Sng heads one faction that now has three elected representatives, while Dr James Masing heads the other faction which is supported by eight elected representatives.

Both have held their separate party elections and the ROS is expected to make an announcement soon on which faction is legitimate.

During a recent visit to a longhouse in Kanowit, Sng announced that he would give way to Mawan as leader of the new entity after the merger. Furthermore, he stated that he was not setting down any pre condition even for the deputy president post.

Mawan told reporters that a major hurdle had been cleared with Sng's stand on the question of future leadership in the merged entity and thanked Sng for his confidence in his leadership.

He also said that the SPDP merger talks committee headed by the party's deputy president Peter Nyarok is already in place.

"The mechanism will operate once talks can begin formally...we are already holding informal discussions (on the issue). It's in fact ongoing," he added.

### **A single party**

The SPDP chief disclosed that Masing was unhappy when SPDP called off talks on the merger before the last state election, but he added that this was unavoidable because of the fiasco within PRS where there was no clear line of authority.

Furthermore, he commented that the merger should not end only with PRS and SPDP but should also involve other component parties Supp and PBB eventually to form a single party to reflect the multi-racial characteristics of the country.

"I have no problem at all with that," Mawan said, adding that Sng, who is pushing for the merger, is still young but can see clearly into the future.

Sng told reporters that the two parties hoped to work closer together in the coming parliamentary election and that they would decide on the candidacy issue in consultation with state and federal BN leadership.

A merger of the two parties will make the new entity the second largest component in the state's ruling coalition after Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud's PBB.

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