

Talks fail, it's a 3-way fight in Batu Sapi
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The Batu Sapi by-election will see a three-cornered fight between BN, PKR and SAPP as attempts to bring the two opposition parties together have hit a stone wall.



Despite attempts to iron out a deal for a one-to-one fight against BN, opposition parties PKR and SAPP have failed to find common ground, with both parties adamant in their decision to field their own candidates in the upcoming by-election.

"We reiterated our stand made by the supreme council on Oct 16 that the party will contest in Batu Sapi for the reasons we have stated."

"We do not see any basis for us to change that decision, and we maintain our decision to contest in Batu Sapi," said SAPP president Yong Teck Lee in a press conference after the failed talks.

Also at the press conference was PKR treasurer and Selayang parliamentarian William Leong, who conceded that they accepted SAPP's decision.



"Pakatan has decided that PKR will contest, but I am happy we are here today in an open free flow exchange of ideas on how to proceed."

"While we did not agree on a one-to-one contest to avoid a three-corner fight, it is not over, the fact that we are talking suggests the subject is not over, and we will continue to talk," said Leong (left).

Today's high-level talks between the two parties saw Leong and Yong leading the delegation thrash out the matter in a lunch meeting.

No mudslinging

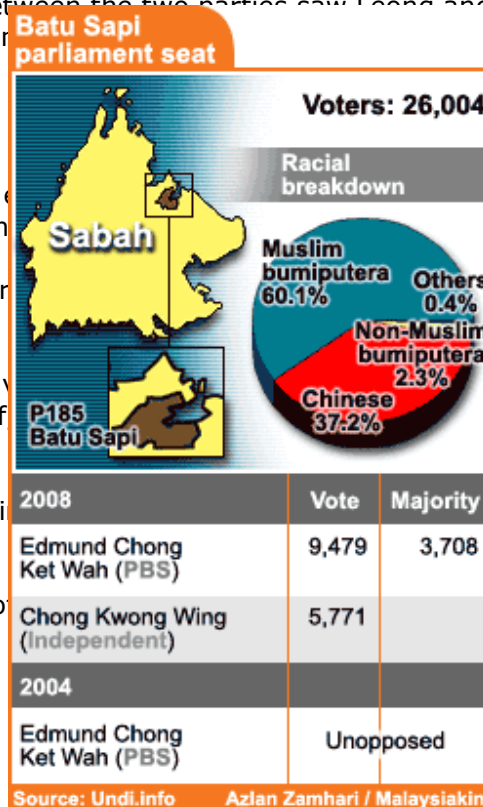
However, both leaders said that while they did not see a way to agree to work together on issues beyond Batu Sapi, in

"We discussed our openness in exploring further cooperation and preparation for the next general election.

"This is not the first since we left BN that we have had to have talked to opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim himself and others, on and off. It will continue," assured Yong.

SAPP and PKR have also agreed that the subject of their contesting BN and Umno.

It is also agreed that their respective candidates will not



election.

"Even before this meeting, we briefed our branches in Batu Sapi and Sandakan, and today we discussed it also, our aim is to topple BN. So issues will be against BN and the government," said Yong.

Leong agreed with him, saying that PKR will also implement similar safeguards.

"We concentrate on issues, policies, how to ensure better governance. It is not our intention to engage in any personal attacks or issues with relation to personality."

But both leaders added that they are not going to just sit still in the contest despite it being a friendly competition.

"For PKR in any contest we aim to win," stated Leong.

"In SAPP our motto is fight to win," joked Yong, smiling.

Split opposition

Quizzed about the chances of the opposition parties' fielding two candidates against a united BN, Yong said that while the conventional wisdom of having the opposition votes split may give BN the advantage, he thinks that it may not be the case altogether.

It is possible that while SAPP is running a Chinese candidate, PKR could opt for a Muslim candidate to attract voters who would normally back the BN candidate. This strategy may increase the chances of either one of the two opposition parties emerging victorious. The nomination date set by the Election Commission (EC) is next Tuesday with polling fixed for Nov 4.

The by-election is called following the death of incumbent Edmund Chong Ket Wah in a road accident just prior to the current parliamentary sitting.

Chong won the seat in the 2008 general election by a 3,708-majority, defeating independent candidate Chung Ong Wing. Chong polled 9,479 votes as against Chung's 5,771.

Batu Sapi has 25,582 voters, of whom 24,047 are ordinary voters and 1,535 postal voters, with 15,099 or 59.02 percent of the voters being Muslim bumiputeras, 689 non-Muslim bumiputeras (2.69 percent), 9,737 Chinese (38.06 percent) and others, 57 (0.22 percent).

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