

Chan: Lily Yong will not be SUPP candidate for Padungan
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KUCHING - SUPP President Dr. George Chan has confirmed that Lily Yong who was tipped to stand in Padungan is definitely out of contention in the upcoming Sarawak elections.

Chan disclosed that SUPP may even resort to take in a candidate from another branch if a constituency did not have an experienced candidate to field.

Speaking to reporters at the Kuching International Airport on Friday, Chan said Padungan needs a new face to win.

When asked if Lily Yong was also one of the three potential candidates chosen, George asked back with a laugh, "Is she new?" He added that it was Yong herself who wanted out.

To him, anything is possible in Padungan, but he added that it is better for a candidate to be from its own branch. Three names had been submitted to him.

Yong has been endorsed to be a candidate by her own branch twice. She won in 2001 but lost to PKR's Dominique Ng Kim Ho in the 2006 state election.

Potential candidates mentioned for Padungan included businessman Wee Hong Seng, SUPP Kuching branch youth chairman Bong Lian Huan, Chinese newspaper owner Wee Kok Tiong, Kuching City South mayor James Chan and party-less ex-PRS member Larry S'ng.

Wanting a win badly, Chan said as long as a candidate is winnable, it did not matter where he is from. He said at the end of the day, the people must accept the choice of candidate or they will not vote for him.

Since its formation in 1959 SUPP suffered its worst defeat in the 2006 state elections. After losing eight seats out of its contested 19, the party continued to lose support in urban areas.

The losing seats are mostly in Kuching in predominant Chinese areas. Issues connected to lands, Chinese school education, corruption, displeasure of leaders who stayed on too long are some of the grouses that placed SUPP in a bad light.

Some blamed it on the Taib Mahmud administration while others said SUPP is partly to be blamed as most of its own leaders refused to give way and are in their 60s and 70s.

Being saddled with internal conflicts, the party's popularity slides further down. When SUPP lost its stronghold in the Sibu by-election in May this year following the death of Robert Lau Hui Chew, the party was at its lowest ebb.

SUPP's defeat in Sibu has caused the Chief Minister to declare that he did not know what Chinese wants.

This made the Chinese angrier as they claimed that SUPP leaders have lost touch with the people and did not convey the Chinese's needs to Taib Mahmud.

Chan is prepared to do anything for a win this time round to salvage back lost grounds even

if it means taking in Johnicol Rayong who stood on a SNAP ticket and then opted to be an Independent.

Johnicol had applied to join SUPP and is willing to contest under SUPP in the coming election. This has earned the irk of the Engkilili chairman, Toh Heng Sang, who has threatened to resign if the decision was made by a few leaders instead of through the central committee.

In Meradong, one of the lost seats of SUPP, Chan said there is no confirmed candidate but he heard Thomas Hii has been working hard on the ground. He added that three names had been submitted to him and the party is yet to make a decision.

In the last election, SUPP candidate Wong Zee Yeng lost to DAP's Ting Tze Hui in a four-corner fight.

Padungan and Meradong are the two constituencies where the names of the candidates are yet to be confirmed.

The other lost seats in 2006 were Pending, Batu Lintang, Sentosa, Kidurong, Engkilili and Bukit Assek.

The potential SUPP candidates for the lost seats are: Dr Sim Kui Hian (Pending), Central Youth chairman Sih Hua Tong (Batu Lintang), Johnicol Rayong (Engkilili), Chieng Boon Tong (Bukit Assek), lawyer Henry Ling (Kidurong) and Alfred Yap (Sentosa) who lost in the same constituency in 2006.

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