

# PAS joins PKR in boycott

Discrepancies in area electoral roll among reasons cited

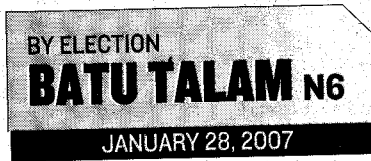
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**RAUB:** PAS has joined Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) in boycotting the Batu Talam by-election - leaving no credible opposition to take on the Barisan Nasional in the by-election scheduled for Jan 28.

PAS deputy president Nasharuddin Mat Isa, who announced the decision here last night, cited discrepancies in the electoral roll for the constituency as well as postal votes that were not transparent and prejudiced as among the reasons for the boycott.

Three days ago, PKR issued a statement stating that they would not contest the by-election, citing similar reasons.

Nasharuddin said the Election Commission's process of updating



the electoral roll of 10,748 voters for Batu Talam, which now stood at 10,524 voters, was not conducted with the participation of the political parties.

Nasharuddin also said the two opposition parties questioned the impartiality of the commission and the election process.

"Our doubts were strengthened by the commission chairman's statement that the election laws and regulations are 50 years old and no

longer suitable today and that it does not give space for the commission to guarantee fairness for all parties since the social order has also changed," he told supporters at the PAS constituency headquarters here.

Earlier yesterday, PKR adviser Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim questioned the haste of holding the Batu Talam by-elections when the laws said to be ineffective by the Election Commission chairman have yet to be changed.

Anwar said PKR had held discussions with PAS on the Jan 28 Batu Talam by-elections.

Commission chairman Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman's statement had called for an independent commission to oversee changes in

the election laws.

The Batu Talam seat fell vacant following the death of Barisan Nasional state assemblyman Datuk Tengku Paris Tengku Razlan, 65, of cancer on Dec 27. In the last general election in 2004, he beat Dr Mohamed Nilam Abdul Manaf of PAS with a majority of 2,761 votes.

Nomination day has been fixed for Jan 16. It remains to be seen if any independent candidates will show up that day to deny Barisan the opportunity to win the seat uncontested.

The DAP recently said it was not interested in contesting the seat while PKR announced on Monday that it would not join the fight but would back PAS in the by-election.