

## **Murali Pillai named PAP candidate for Bukit Batok by-election**

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The People's Action Party (PAP) has named lawyer K Muralidharan Pillai as its candidate for the Bukit Batok by-election.

This was announced at a press conference held at the PAP Bukit Batok branch on Monday (Mar 21).

Mr Murali, 48, contested the General Election in 2015, as part of the PAP team challenging the incumbent Worker's Party team (WP) in Aljunied GRC. PAP garnered 49.05 per cent of the vote, losing narrowly to WP's 50.95 per cent.

Mr Murali is the head of commercial litigation at Rajah and Tann. Before embarking on a legal career, he was Assistant Superintendent in the Singapore Police Force.

A long-time PAP activist, he is married with four children. He is also the son of PK Pillai, a unionist detained under Operation Coldstore in 1963.

Currently the chairman of PAP's Paya Lebar branch, Mr Murali was formerly the Branch Secretary of PAP Bukit Batok under the late Dr Ong Chit Chung. Dr Ong was MP for the Bukit Batok ward under Jurong Group Representation Constituency (GRC) from 2001 until his death in 2008.

### **A STRAIGHT FIGHT BETWEEN THE PAP AND SDP?**

So far, the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) is the only opposition party that has confirmed it will contest the Bukit Batok by-election. SDP chief Chee Soon Juan will be the party's candidate.

At a walkabout with party members on Sunday (Mar 20), Dr Chee told the media that if elected, he will put in place local elections for town council leaders, as well as hold quarterly townhall meetings.

According to the Electoral Boundaries Committee, there are 27,068 eligible voters in Bukit Batok Single Member Constituency.

Dr Gillian Koh, deputy director at the Institute of Policy Studies, has suggested that Bukit Batok's demographics – with 95 per cent living in public housing – may be favourable to the ruling party's candidate.

"In our surveys, this is the demographic that rallies around the People's Action Party," she wrote in a note dated Mar 14.

The by-election was triggered by the resignation of Bukit Batok MP David Ong on Mar 12. Mr Ong left his post after an extramarital affair with a grassroots activist came to light. Both have resigned from the party.

Mr Ong entered Parliament in 2011, representing the Bukit Batok ward when it was under the Jurong GRC. It was carved out as a single-seat ward in 2015.