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Pressure mounts on aspirants as nomination day draws nearer

ALOR STAR, Wed. - There has been much unease among Umno members who aspire to become Barisan Nasional candidates as the nomination day for the Pendang and Anak Bukit by-elections draws nearer.

Kedah Umno chief Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain is probably in denial mode but the truth is lobbying is intensive, especially in the Kuala Kedah division which he heads.

Speculation in newspapers and websites has put mounting pressure on some hopefuls and their supporters, especially when new names have been added to the list in the past few days.

There were those who trailed national party leaders, who came here to survey the two constituencies, back to Kuala Lumpur with the hope the leaders would promote them.

"Many things can happen from now until July 10," said one aspiring candidate.

Another Anak Bukit hopeful was reported to have rented several vehicles for use by his supporters.

The aspirants and their supporters can hardly wait for Friday when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad visits the State.

They believe the party president would either endorse the candidates or at least able to shed some light after the briefing in Kuala Lumpur today by Syed Razak on the by-elections.

Dr Mahathir is making a half-day visit to his Kubang Pasu constituency before leaving for Bangkok.

Several Umno leaders said the BN candidates should be named as early as possible to give ample time for party leaders to pacify dissatisfied supporters.

"The names should be announced three or four days before the nomination day to avoid squabbling among dissatisfied members. We should take note of past experiences in Umno," Pendang by-election director and Sungai Tiang Assemblyman Md Rozai Shapian said.

Datuk Abdullah Hasnan Kamaruddin, who was defeated in Anak Bukit by the late Pas president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor in the 1999 general election, shared Md Rozai's view, but said the BN candidates should be announced one or two days before the nomination day.

Kedah BN secretary Ahmad Lebai Sudin, who is Pokok Sena Umno division chief, said the Umno party machinery was usually disrupted after the candidates were announced.

However, he believed Umno members will accept the candidates chosen as they were endorsed by the party leadership.

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