

Kelantan Umno gears up to recapture state
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Kelantan Umno is expected to shuffle its heavyweights for the coming election as it is bent on recapturing the state from PAS.

The election fever is apparent as nine out of the 14 Umno branches have already submitted the names of their choice candidates for evaluation by the state liaison committee.

According to a source, this also includes the Ketereh division headed by Umno Kelantan liaison committee chairperson Anuar Musa (left). The other divisions are Kota Baru, Bachok, Tumpat, Pasir Puteh, Pengkalan Chepa, Kubang Kerian, Rantau Panjang and Pasir Mas.

The remaining five divisions – Jeli, Gua Musang, Kuala Krai, Tanah Merah dan Machang - will have to submit their respective lists by the end of the month.

Kelantan has been under the control of PAS for nearly two decades. The Islamic-party first came into power following the 1990 general elections.

However, its influence took a whipping in the 2004 polls and the party clung on to its rule with a mere two-seat majority in the 45-seat state assembly.

In 2005, PAS suffered another blow when it lost the Pengkalan Pasir state seat to Umno in a by-election.

The source said based on the list submitted by the Ketereh division, changes appear imminent.

The coming polls could see Anuar contesting for the Ketereh parliamentary seat which is currently held by state Umno information chief Alwi Che Mat.

Presently, Anuar is the state assemblyperson for Kok Lanas and opposition leader in the state assembly.

Alwi, on the other hand, is slated to contest the Kadok state seat, which falls under the Ketereh parliamentary constituency.

Confident of victory

Meanwhile, Kelantan Umno deputy chairperson Awang Adek Husein, who is the MP for Bachok, is expected to contest for the Jelawat state seat whereas Jelawat incumbent Dr Illias Hussein will run in Bachok.

The source said the suggestion to move Awang Adek to a state seat is based on the confidence of Kelantan Umno in taking over the state.

Apart from this, he said state Umno Youth chief Dali Hussein might take on PAS

leader Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman for the Pengkalan Chepa parliamentary seat.

Pengkalan Chepa Umno chief Dr Nik Mohd Zain Omar, who contested the seat unsuccessfully in three elections, could be dropped from the line-up.

Other new faces are Special Affairs Department director Dr Suhaili Hussein who is expected to contest for the Tumpat parliamentary seat and Mohd Afandi Yusof who might run for the Rantau Panjang parliamentary seat. Afandi is the Rantau Panjang Umno Youth chief.

As for Zaid Ibrahim, the source said the Umno headquarters in Kuala Lumpur will decide if he should defend his Kota Baru parliamentary seat.

Zaid had previously irked the party's top leaders when he lashed out following his eighteen-month suspension for money politics in the 2005 Umno polls.

Last month, it was reported that the outspoken leader had been told that he would not be reinstated as Kota Baru Umno division chief after his suspension expired on Dec 23.

The source said other local Umno leaders like Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman, Che Min Che Ahmad and Kamaruddin Mohd Nor were not expected to be moved to other seats.

Whereas the Kota Lama state seat, which has a sizable Chinese electorate, would be contested by MCA. The seat is currently held by PAS.

The Kelantan Umno political bureau, which is headed by Annuar, would hold a special meeting to study the respective lists before submitting the names to the Umno headquarters.

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