

Ijok: Khalid vs Nalla?
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The upcoming Ijok by-election in Selangor is turning out to be a bane for Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) in terms of who it should field.

Adding fuel to the fire today was the opposition party's Barisan Alternatif (BA) ally, PAS.

PAS Selangor has stated that it will only support PKR in the April 28 by-election if the party fields its Selangor chief Khalid Ibrahim (photo, right).

Should another candidate be chosen, PAS Selangor said it would have to consider whether to extend its support.

While pundits are placing their wager on Khalid, a group of Indian PKR members and supporters have objected to this.

They want the party to field businessman S Nallakarupan (photo, left) instead.

Nallakarupan, who joined the party last year, is a close associate of PKR advisor Anwar Ibrahim. He is also expected to vie for vice-presidency in next month's party polls.

According to sources, PKR Indian members and supporters will hold a meeting this evening to decide if they should support Khalid if he is selected.

"We are not satisfied because PKR only fields Malay candidates in by-elections. We want Anwar to provide Indian members with a better platform in the party, which prides itself in being multiracial," said a source.

Nomination day for the seat is next Thursday. The Ijok state seat fell vacant following the death of its three-term MIC assemblyperson K Sivalingam on April 4.

Better chances

Meanwhile, PAS Selangor chief Dr Hassan Ali said the decision to support Khalid was made at a meeting last week and this stand has been conveyed to PKR.

"I was informed that PKR is in the process of deliberating our condition regarding this matter," he said when contacted.

According to the PAS leader, Khalid is a capable politician and a native of Kuala Selangor.

Fielding him as a candidate would be more appropriate since the majority of voters in Ijok are Malays, he said.

Hassan added that Khalid was a well-known corporate figure well-respected by the locals and used to possess a certain standing in the Kuala Selangor Umno division.

"If he contests, the chances of winning would be much higher compared to any other

candidate," he said.

Khalid, who is also the PKR treasurer, was the former chief executive officer of plantation giant Kumpulan Guthrie Bhd and among the founders of state agency Pemodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB).

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