

Wan Azizah: Candidate's race not a factor
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Beh Lih Yi

Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said race was not a factor in the decision to field party treasurer Khalid Ibrahim in the upcoming Ijok by-election in Selangor.

Addressing a crowd of more than 1,000 people in Batang Berjuntai tonight, she described the decision as a "tough" one.

She said Khalid was chosen based on eligibility and the party believes that he is the best person to represent the people in this constituency.

Wan Azizah confirmed that Khalid, a former corporate figure, as the party's candidate at about 9.50pm. Also present was her husband and PKR advisor Anwar Ibrahim.

The choice of candidate has been the subject of much controversy as certain quarters have urged the opposition party to field an Indian member to prove its multi-racialism.

Khalid will be taking on Barisan Nasional's MIC candidate K Parthiban in the April 28 contest. The Ijok state seat fell vacant following the death of its MIC incumbent K Sivalingam on April 4.

Nalla to campaign

Apart from Khalid, businessman-cum-politician S Nallakarupan was also touted as a possible PKR candidate.

Nallakaruppan, who was present at tonight's function, supported Khalid's candidacy and pledged to campaign for him.

"MIC only represents the Indians, we (PKR) represent all Malaysians," he told the crowd.

Meanwhile, Khalid, 61, also vowed to fight for all Malaysians. The rookie politician kicked off his speech with the familiar 'reformasi' clarion call.

"When the general enters the ring, he does not run away. He will fight in order to protect the rakyat and not just one particular group," he said to a thunderous applause.

PAS deputy president Nasharuddin Mat Isa, who was also present, endorsed Khalid's candidacy and said his party president Abdul Hadi Awang and spiritual leader Nik Aziz Nik Mat will come to the ground to campaign.

PAS and PKR are members of the opposition coalition, Barisan Alternatif.

At press time, Anwar was still in the midst of his speech. The former deputy premier also stated that Khalid was the best choice.

"Some people have asked why a big personality like him would want to contest in Ijok.

Khalid does not care if it (the constituency) is big or small, he has chosen this ground to start his fight for the rakyat. If he is not qualified, then I don't know who else is," he said.

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