

**Penang PRM against standing in PKR seats**  
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**by Susan Loone**

PRM's recent plan to contest in three constituencies including Balik Pulau in the coming general election has raised the ire of its own state leadership in Penang.

Penang PRM chairperson Gary Nair has come out strongly against the idea, saying that he will not support any attempt to undermine the Pakatan Rakyat leadership in the state.

He said the state PRM leaders had held a meeting last night and was totally against the idea of the party contesting in a three-cornered fight in Balik Pulau.

"Penang PRM will not field any candidate if it is a three-cornered fight because it would only benefit Barisan Nasional and Umno," he said.

"Why should we let BN and Umno win by default? They are our common enemy," he added.

Gary said Penang PRM had pledged its firm support to Pakatan and will not go against the coalition in the coming GE.

"I have conveyed our opinion to the party and have also spoken to PRM president Rohana Ariffin about the matter," he said, adding the state PRM will call a press conference soon to explain the matter further.

'Democratic right to contest'

Yesterday, Rohana announced that they were gunning for Balik Pulau in Penang, and Selayang and Petaling Jaya Selatan in Selangor in the next general election.

The seats involved are currently held by Yusmadi Yusof, William Leong and Hee Loy Sian respectively.

Despite severe criticisms, Rohana said it was PRM's democratic right to compete, and that if the opposition was not willing to negotiate "then that's their problem".

Meanwhile, PRM's intention to join the election race would have been welcomed if not for the three seats being those held by PKR.

State PKR vice-chairperson Abdul Halim Hussain said he would advice PRM not to contest in Balik Pulau for the sake of opposition unity, adding "let it be a fight between BN and PKR".

Abdul Halim, who is Balik Pulau PKR division chief, said that Rohana, who had just retired from being a USM lecturer then, had previously contested under PKR's ticket in 2004, and failed to win a seat.

"What are the issues she wants to bring about in Balik Pulau now?"

"She had a chance to run as a candidate under PKR last time, so I do not see any valid reason for PRM to contest now," he added.

'What is PRM's agenda?'

Abdul Halim questioned PRM's agenda in insisting that it wants to contest in PKR seats although it says it wants to fight against BN.

"We are willing to listen to them, on why they feel the need to contest in Balik Pulau. There must be a purpose because we do not contest for the sake of contesting," added the Penang state legislative assembly speaker.

Abdul Halim also said he was "confused" over PRM's intention to contest in Balik Pulau when many of its members have already joined PKR.

He added that it was not advisable to have three-cornered fights because unity between the opposition in 2008 led to Pakatan Rakyat taking control of the government in Penang.

"We were united until we formed the government in Penang," he said.

However, Abdul Halim conceded that in the 1960s, Balik Pulau was once upon a time a stronghold of PRM.

But over the years, these members have joined PKR, especially after PRM's merger with the party.

"Of course they are still some diehard supporters of PRM among us. Many from Umno and PRM joined us in PKR, and they surely still have their old party ways. We cannot blame them for this," he added.

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