

One seat holds up Penang PKR's candidate list
MalaysiaKini.com
April 17, 2012
By Susan Loone

PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim has hinted that a particular seat in Penang requires further discussions and this has held up the party's list of proposed candidates for the coming general election.

Speculation is rife the seat may be Pantai Jerejak which is currently held by state assemblyperson Sim Tze Tzin, who is also PKR Bayan Baru division chief.

NONEAccording to party insiders, Sim (right) is eyeing the Bayan Baru parliamentary seat presently held by Zahrain Mohd Hashim, formerly PKR and now a BN-friendly independent MP since February 2010.

Sim, however, is non-committal on the issue and says the party leadership has the final word on candidates in both parliamentary and state seats.

However, Malaysiakini has learnt that a group of about 20 party members had recently met with state PKR chief and Deputy Chief Minister I Mansor Othman to voice out their concerns about the proposed candidate for Pantai Jerejak.

The group had come to know but disagreed with the plan that Penang municipal councillor Rashid Hasnor would be fielded there.

According to one of the members who attended the meeting in Komtar, the group wanted the party to maintain the current haul of five state seats and one parliamentary seat for Chinese PKR candidates.

"We raised our concerns because Pantai Jerejak is a Chinese-majority seat," said the party member, who requested anonymity.

"We do not want this to be a racial issue but we would like to maintain the previous formula of five state seats plus one parliamentary seat for PKR Chinese candidates to ensure that all ethnic communities are properly represented," he added.

New faces in lineup

When contacted, Sim denied that Pantai Jerejak was the seat Anwar had referred to that needed "further discussions".

He said Anwar might have been talking about the seat negotiations with PAS or DAP which may not have been completed yet.

Sim added that the party has yet to decide on the list of candidates although each branch has proposed three names per seat to the party's headquarters.

NONEHowever, he admitted that following the meeting between Mansor (left) and the group of 20, the Bayan Baru leadership had also met with the state party chief to express its views.

"We will leave it to the party leadership to decide which candidate to field in which seat.

"PKR is a multi-racial and democratic party, we want winnable candidates and those who are loyal to the party regardless of race or religion," he added.

Bayan Baru is an important seat for PKR as the parliamentary constituency plus all three state seats

under it are held by the party - the other two being Batu Maung (Abdul Malik Abul Kassim) and Batu Uban (S Raveentharan).

Meanwhile, it is learnt that several new faces may be included in the Penang PKR lineup.

The party is reportedly toying with the idea of fielding individuals such as MPPP councillor Felix Ooi, Mansor's special officer John Ooh Sin Hwa, Tan Ton Seng, former staff of state executive Lydia Ong and several other Malay and Indian candidates.

However, it is still unclear if the new faces would be fielded in seats currently held by PKR or seats which the party had lost in 2008.

The party had lost in Bertam, Pinang Tunggal, Telok Ayer Tawar, Sungai Acheh, Pulau Betong and Telok Bahang, which were all won by Umno.

Party seeking the best option

Meanwhile, it appears that Pantai Jerejak may not be the only "problematic" constituency faced by the state PKR leadership.

It is speculated that seats such as Kebun Bunga (Jason Ong), Batu Uban (Raveentharan), Bukit Tengah (Ong Chin Wen) and Machang Bubuk (Tan Hock Leong) are in for a major shake-up.

Tan had suffered a stroke recently and is unlikely to recontest his seat, while the remaining trio's future is uncertain as they grapple with reports of under performance in their constituencies.

NONEWhen asked about Pantai Jerejak, state PKR veep Abdul Halim Hussain (right) said the party was seeking "the best option" for the state seat to secure a clear victory.

"This time we would have to be very careful in choosing candidates because the candidate we put there has to make a difference in (winning) votes," he told Malaysiakini.

"It does not matter if he or she has the backing of the party or has a very high position, but if he or she is not the people's choice, then it would be a problem," he added.

On the speculation of new faces in the lineup, Abdul Halim said they would most probably be fielded in seats the party had previously lost.

He declined to comment on the PKR assemblypersons which are perceived as underperforming and merely said "the party would be looking into the matter".

