

Penang BN candidacy issues holding back GE13?

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By Susan Loone

Penang BN is facing challenges in preparing many of its polling districts for the next general election due to indecision in some component parties as to who should contest in these areas.

State BN chief Teng Chang Yeow dismissed the seriousness of the situation on the ground, saying that it is a problem faced by every political party.

"They (the component parties) are scared the people they support will not become candidates. But this time we said 'No, we are preparing ourselves at the Barisan Nasional level'," he said on the sidelines of a press conference last night.

"We do not care who is contesting, whether (the person) is (from) Gerakan, MCA, MIC or Umno. As long as it is a seat (that we are contesting), we shall perform as the BN.

"We do not care if Gerakan, for example, has not decided who the candidates (will be). We will still move as BN. These are the issues we are trying to solve now."

Asked if Prime Minister and BN head Najib Abdul Razak has given any indication when the 13th general election will be called, Teng said the coalition has been on standby since last year.

"As the PM has said, it is on a three-month basis. If it does not happen within these three months, then we will work towards the next three months," he said.

As to whether Najib is delaying elections due to problems on the ground, Teng pleaded ignorance and noted that it is the prime minister's prerogative to call for elections.

"What is his assessment, we do not know. But we are prepared to fight the battle. We are prepared at state and division level the last time," he said.

"Now we are going 'micro', to the polling district level. Polling districts are the ones which move during elections. In the past, polling districts only start preparing when Parliament is dissolved. (This time around), we (are starting early)."

Review in progress

Teng also said Penang BN leaders are currently reviewing the preparedness of the 345 polling districts in the state, half of which are "in full gear" while the rest need to be "fine-tuned".

"Some have gone through half of the preparations and some have only just started. We want them all to move and complete preparations for the election as early as within these two weeks," he said.

Teng, who is also Gerakan secretary-general, said leaders like state Umno deputy chief Musa Sheik Fadzir have gone to the polling districts, including those in Jelutong, Batu Kawan and Kepala Batas.

House-to-house visits have been conducted, and the state leadership is satisfied with the feedback received thus far.

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