

Penang PKR goes 'frog' hunting ahead of GE

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By Susan Loone

Penang PKR is on the hunt for 'political frogs' to ensure they do not make it to the list of candidates for the coming 13th general elections.

State PKR chief Mansor Othman said that the party is trying its best to eliminate them through a rigorous selection process.

Mansor, who is also deputy chief minister, added that the party's candidate selection team has a list of criteria that potential parliamentarians and assemblymen must meet before being listed.

"We proposed those who are professional, winnable, with integrity, and well-received by their constituents," Mansor told reporters at a Hari Raya open house in Guar Perahu, Bukit Mertajam, yesterday.

"We vet them carefully and select them based on what they have contributed the party and their length of membership and support," he added at the event jointly organised with Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who is Permatang Pauh MP.

Since 2010, PKR has been rocked by a string of defections, losing six parliamentarians, reducing its representation from 31 to 24, while several assemblymen have defected.

The most notable PKR defections occurred in Perak where two of its reps - and a DAP assemblywoman - left their parties to becoming BN-friendly, resulting in the fall of the Pakatan government to BN.

Spoilt for choice

Mansor reiterated that the party was spoilt for choice when it came to the selection of candidates this time round, as many have offered to contest in the polls, which could occur this year.

Would such a situation lead to an oversupply of candidates as the party has only 16 seats to contest in Penang, with DAP 19 and PAS five?

In the 2008 political tsunami, PKR won nine seats, while DAP captured all 19, and PAS only one.

It is learnt that the parties would strive to maintain a status quo on seats contested although there are attempts by each party to obtain more opportunities to contest.

DAP is being challenged to include more Malay candidates in its line-up, while within PKR, there are rumbles that the party must field more Chinese candidates this time around.

PAS, on the other hand, wants to expand its presence in Penang, to bring more Malay-Muslim influence in a state administration that locals have described as being "DAP-led".

New faces

Asked if there would be any surprises or changes to the PKR state line-up, Mansor reiterated that 30 percent or about five candidates would be of "new faces", adding "the numbers would be more than that of the last GE".

When asked if a candidate could contest more than one seat, Mansor said that would be up to the party to decide.

As for him running for Parliament and state, Mansor did not reject the idea.

"I am open to it but it is up to the party leadership to decide. If they give the nod, I am willing to do it," he said.

On whether the selected candidates proposed by the state leadership have been approved by its central counterpart, Mansor refused to elaborate, saying "we are still working on some seats".

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