

PKR doubtful of Asri's GE candidacy
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Prominent religious leader Asri Zainul Abidin, initially touted as a PKR candidate in the coming general election, may not be nominated as a candidate by the party.

PKR sources told Malaysiakini that Asri is deemed as "not serious enough" to contest because of his meeting with Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak a fortnight ago.

Asri himself is understood to have made a decision to reject the offer to stand as a candidate even though he was promised the post of deputy chief minister in Penang.

The sources also said PKR was demanding an immediate assurance of commitment from the former Perlis mufti as the party expects Parliament to be dissolved by the end of this month.

It is understood that the offer for the post of deputy chief minister's was made by Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim (right) himself during his recent meeting with Asri.

Asri revealed on his Twitter account last night that he had met with the prime minister recently.

However, details of his discussion with Najib - whether it was about his nomination as a candidate for the forthcoming election or related to other matters - remain in the dark.

"Two weeks ago, PM (Najib) invited me to his office himself. I gave him my views and he listened to them intently. I appreciate his attitude," Asri tweeted.

Letters of meeting with PM

According to party insiders, PKR is uncomfortable with Asri's communication with Najib because seat negotiations between Asri and the party are ongoing.

It is understood that letters about Asri's meeting with the prime minister have been shown to several PKR leaders.

Among them is a letter in which Najib's camp spells out that the meeting was arranged at the prime minister's office on the evening of Feb 28 by an aide to the prime minister.

Asri is known to have long-standing ties with several political leaders, from both BN and Pakatan Rakyat.

He shot to prominence through his PAS-related activities during his years as an undergraduate and was appointed mufti of Perlis when Shahidan Kassim served as Perlis menteri besar, before he was dropped following the 2008 general election.

Apart from maintaining his ties with the Umno leader, Asri is also said to have met with PAS and DAP leaders.

Both PAS and DAP are also believed to be interested in nominating Asri as a candidate.

Malaysiakini understands that DAP is keen to provide Asri with a safe seat to contest in Penang, while PKR is interested in fielding the current Universiti Sains Malaysia lecturer in Penanti, a state seat under the Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat held by Anwar.

Asri rejects candidacy, can still contribute

Meanwhile, Asri refused to comment on the matter when contacted by Malaysiakini.

It is, however, understood that Asri is not interested in contesting in the general election because he feels that the move is "not appropriate."

According to a source close to him, Asri feels he can still contribute, even without being an assemblyperson.

"Wait for the new political era post-13th general election," said the source, before adding that "Asri will be present in the next series".

The decision was made after months of coaxing by PKR to get Asri to contest, which included sending their top leaders to meet him.

According to the source, Asri was contacted by a PKR vice-president as recently as last week, with the PKR leader urging him to consider standing on a PKR ticket.

Apart from Asri, current Perlis mufti Juanda Jaya and International Islamic University (UIA) lecturer Maszlee Mailk are two other young religious leaders who are being wooed by Pakatan in their campaign to defeat BN in the coming election.

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