

Young candidates to assail Najib in Pekan

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By Ahmad Fadli KC

BN chairperson Najib Abdul Razak will face two young candidates in his traditional parliamentary seat of Pekan, one a student and the other possibly PKR supreme council member Fariz Musa.

Student group GM13 announced in Kuala Lumpur today that Mohamed Bukhairy Mohamed Sufian would stand in Pekan, confirming reports that the movement will challenge the caretaker prime minister in his own stronghold.

While PKR has not yet named a candidate for the Pahang parliamentary seat, Malaysiakini was told that the party would almost certainly field Fariz there.

Mohamed Bukhairy (sitting, centre), a final year political science student of Universiti Malaya, was announced as GM13 candidate by Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia (SMM) president Safwan Anang.

It is understood that the drastic move by the group was taken after it failed to convince Pakatan to allow it to have a head-to-head fight with Najib.

"If Pakatan Rakyat announces candidates there, that is (their) democratic space. The important thing is that we are not there to cause trouble.

"We have our own issues to bring forward, which thus far have yet to be championed by any party," said Safwan.

Najib in the 2008 general election for the Pekan constituency trounced PKR's Khairul Anuar Ahmad Zainuddin with a majority of 26,464 votes.

Although the battle for Pekan may interest observers, Pakatan Rakyat supporters are concerned that the students' move would split the anti-BN votes.

Meanwhile, Bukhairy, who is also the Majlis Pimpinan Mahasiswa national chairperson, said that he is offering a "new national higher education policy" for the people of Pekan.

"This issue is evergreen. Thus far we are carrying forward this policy and, praise be to God, there are people in Pekan who accept it.

"For local issues (in Pekan) we are still studying the matter," he said.

Meanwhile, Fariz (right) told Malaysiakini when contacted that he welcomes the group's intention to place their candidate in Pekan, because they share "the same mission" of toppling BN.

"I have no problems with that because it is their right to contest," he said, adding that he

does not think the situation would split PKR votes because he believes the voters there are mature.

However, he declined to confirm whether he has been picked to contest in Pekan and leaves the matter to his party's discretion.

Rumours of Fariz's candidature - who is a former PKR deputy youth chief and heads the PKR-linked NGO Jingga 13 - have been circulating since he was appointed as the constituency's PKR coordinator since March 19.

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