

Three states still unresolved in Pakatan seat talks

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By Nigel Aw

Pakatan Rakyat is seeking to complete seat negotiations in three unresolved states - Johor, Sabah and Sarawak - all of which are crucial battlegrounds in the coming general election.

"There are some overlapping claims in the three states involving both parliament and state seats," said PKR deputy president Azmin Ali following a two-hour-long Pakatan meeting at the PKR headquarters in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

"This is due to switches, such as in Bentong and Gelang Patah (where PKR made way for DAP). We need to move forward, so we have made some proposals (for possible swaps)," he said.

Among those at the meeting were PAS secretary-general Mustafa Ali, PAS election director Dr Hatta Ramli and DAP deputy chairperson Tan Kok Wai.

Johor, Sabah and Sarawak have been acknowledged by Pakatan as key battleground states as they have more than 80 of the 222 seats in Parliament and would determine which coalition gets to rule from Putrajaya.

As for the other states, Azmin said, the seat allocations have been resolved and would be presented, together with the latest proposals for Johor, Sabah and Sarawak, to the top leadership for endorsement.

This would be done at a high-powered meeting among PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang and DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang on Monday, he said.

Azmin said only three state seats and one parliamentary seat remain unresolved in Johor.

He did not name the parliamentary seat but it is believed to be Segamat, which is said to be eyed by PKR in exchange for surrendering Gelang Patah to DAP.

However, both Johor DAP chairperson Dr Boo Cheng Hau and the DAP's 2008 candidate in Segamat, Pang Hok Liong, are adamant in not conceding the seat to PKR.

Azmin said he had spoken at length with Johor PKR chief Chua Jui Meng and would like him to play a major role in the state.

"He has agreed and we will try to find a suitable seat for him, but this is subject to discussion and endorsement by the top Pakatan leadership," he said.

Chua is eyeing to contest in Segamat after Gelang Patah was taken by Lim.

'PKR to cede seats to PAS'

As for Sabah and Sarawak, Azmin said it largely involved accommodating PAS there as the Islamic party had zero presence in Sabah and a minor presence in Sarawak in the last general election.

"Naturally, they would take PKR seats because most of DAP seats are urban, and PAS needs Malay-majority seats in Sabah in Sarawak.

"That is why PKR is 'poor' because we have to concede seats (to both parties). But we are good people," Azmin said in jest.

He noted that the Election Commission would be announcing the nomination and polling dates on Wednesday and as such, Pakatan plans to officially announce all its candidates the day before.

PKR itself, he said, would meet on Sunday and hopefully finalise its candidates by Monday.

Anwar had, on the eve of Parliament's dissolution on April 3, held a day-long meeting to finalise PKR's candidates list.

The discussion continued on Thursday and yesterday, with a final meeting on the PKR candidates list scheduled for Monday.

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