

Orang Asli to take on BN big guns in GE13

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The Orang Asli community, long considered BN's vote bank 'fixed deposits' for their loyalty to the ruling party, is expected to field candidates against BN big guns in the coming general election.

Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia vice-president Simpan Suda when contacted told Malaysiakini that some of the target constituencies are Rompin, Bera (Pahang) and Tapah (Perak).

The incumbents MPs are BN heavyweights Deputy Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Minister M Saravanan (MIC-Tapah), Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob (Umno-Bera) and BN chief Najib Razak loyalist Jamaluddin Jarjis (Umno-Rompin).

Among the Orang Asli touted to be fielded are lawyer-activist Amani Williams-Hunt @ Bah Tony for the Tapah parliamentary seat.

PKR Felda and Orang Asal bureau deputy chairperson Bob Manolan Mohamad meanwhile is expected to contest in a state seat in Bera.

Simpan, who had served twice as Department of Orang Asli Development (Jakoa) officer, said he may contest in Rompin to capitalise on the 14,000 Orang Asli voters in the constituency.

However, the final decision on Rompin will only be decided at a meeting among 28 tok batin (community leaders) from the area next week, just days before nominations close on April 20, he said.

"We will only know on April 18 who goes where, no earlier," he told Malaysiakini.

Simpan, who is not presently affiliated to any political party, was however elusive about where his loyalties will lie.

"I want to say whether Umno or whichever party, I am not sure (which I will support).

"But (PKR de facto leader) Anwar Ibrahim has come to my house in Port Dickson (Kampung Sunggala)," he said, laughing.

The emergence of more Orang Asli candidates is expected to bring the communities' issues such as native land rights to the forefront in the coming GE set for May 5.

At present the community's only parliamentary representative is Umno senator Muhammad

Olian Abdullah.

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