

## **PAS names non-Muslim for Ayer Hitam**

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**By Foong Chee Wai**

PAS Supporters Congress (PSC) chief Hu Pang Chow, officially named as PAS' Ayer Hitam candidate today, will be the first ever non-Muslim parliamentary candidate to contest under the Islamic party's ticket.

The announcement was made by PAS spiritual leader Nik Aziz Nik Mat in Johor Bahru this morning.

Hu, likely to take on incumbent and MCA Youth chief Wee Ka Siong, is among eight PAS candidates who will contest parliamentary seats in Johor.

In 2008, PAS fielded a non-Muslim candidate Kumutha Rahman who is also from PAS Supporters' Club, but she ran under the PKR ticket.

PAS has since amended its constitution to upgrade its supporters club to a party wing, thus allowing its non-Muslim members to contest directly under the PAS banner.

The PAS announcement this morning also confirms that vice-president Salahuddin Ayub will vie for both the Pulai parliamentary and Nusajaya state seats.

MB in the making?

He is speculated to be Pakatan Rakyat's MB if the coalition takes over Johor, an Umno bastion since independence.

Nusajaya is a state constituency within the Gelang Patah parliamentary constituency which DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang is gunning for.

BN won 25 out of the 26 parliamentary seats and 50 out of 56 state seats in Johor in 2008.

PAS Johor information chief Suhaizan Kaiat (left) will contest Simpang Renggam alongside Mohd Rozali Jamil Hafiz (Pagoh), Khairuddin Abdul Rahim (Parit Sulong), Roslan Nikmat (Mersing) and Onn Jaafar (Kota Tinggi).

PAS is getting the lion share of the state constituencies among Pakatan parties with 30 candidates out of the total of 56.

Notable names in the PAS Johor state candidate list are its state commissioner Mahfodz Mohamed (right) (Gambir), Felda Settlers' Children Association (Anak) chief Mazlan Aliman (Bukit Permai) and Pengerang NGO representative Anis Afida Mohd Azli (Penawar).

Kumutha will return as a state candidate, contesting in Tiram, while former PAS Tenang by-election candidate Normala Sudirman will instead fight for Pemanis.

Suhaizan will also be the candidate for the Kempas state seat.

Deputy headmaster vs deputy minister

Mahfodz (right) told the press conference that the Islamic party will field new faces in seven parliamentary constituencies and 13 state constituencies, making up almost half of the eight parliamentary and 30 state seats it contested.

The youngest candidate is Anis Afida, 24, while the oldest is he himself.

Four or 11 percent out of the 38 candidates are female.

Asked whether contesting the majority 30 out of the 56 state seats will invite disgruntlement from other component parties and uneasiness from the non-Muslim community, Salahuddin replied that it has been agreed by all three component parties.

He stressed that it does not reflect PAS' ambition to dominate Johor but a tactical deployment based on winnability.

Hu, a former teacher, described his uphill battle against Wee as "deputy headmaster versus deputy minister".

His candidature, Hu said, is a testament to PAS' multiracial approach.

Nik Aziz, who just arrived Johor Bahru this morning, gave a short moral-booster speech to the candidates before the candidates announcement was made, but he did not join the press conference due to fatigue.

