

DAP caught between upset allies in Sungai Aceh

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By Susan Loone

PENANG The clash between Penang PAS and PKR over the Sungai Aceh state seat has had an unintended effect - local DAP leaders have been put in a spot, wondering which candidate to support during the election campaign which began last Saturday.

Although PKR has since been given the rural Malay seat, which falls under the Nibong Tebal parliamentary constituency, its relationship with PAS remains strained in the state.

This afternoon, the PAS candidate for Sungai Aceh, Yusni Mat Piah, officially announced his withdrawal from the race.

At PKR's operations centre in Taman Datok Keramat, PAS flags and symbols are missing.

Even the buntings adorning the building are only in blue, red and white - there is no green to be seen.

Nibong Tebal DAP division head Teoh Seang Hooi said party leaders have felt torn between PAS and PKR, but had left it to the central leadership to resolve the matter.

"It is sad that this issue has strained the relationship between the two parties.

"However, whenever they have invited me to speak, PAS has made it very clear that the common enemy is Umno," he told Malaysiakini.

The overlapping claims were settled yesterday. PKR's Badrul Hisham Shaharin (above), better known as Chegubard, is to stay put in Sungai Aceh - he is still technically in a three-way fight with Yusni of PAS and the incumbent, Umno's Mahmud Zakaria.

Yusni (right), who is state PAS Youth chief, said he will announce at 2.30pm today as to whether or not to withdraw from the contest.

Teoh said he has been participating in nightly ceramahs held by Chegubard around Sungai Aceh, alongside Jawi candidate Soon Lip Chee.

Both candidates have strengths and qualities of their own, Teoh noted.

"In terms of charisma, Chegubard has the personality and a better image. In terms of ownership of the seat, it belongs to PAS. I hope the matter will be resolved soon," he said.

Teoh expressed appreciation to PAS and its supporters, saying they have always been "good and faithful comrades" during election campaigns.

"Even when they did not have a seat in Nibong Tebal in 2008, they came out in full force to help out in the election," he added.

In that year, DAP had contested the Jawi state seat, while PKR battled for Nibong Tebal as well as the Sungai Bakap and Sungai Acheh state seats.

Yusni announces pullout from Sungai Acheh

This afternoon, Yusni announced his withdrawal as the PAS Sungai Acheh candidate, since the party's central leadership has decided to drop the state seat in view of three more seats in Terengganu and Labuan.

"I have stopped campaigning in Sungai Acheh and the PAS machinery will move to help our comrade in Kepala Batas," Yusni told Malaysiakini when contacted.

"We abide by the central leadership decision, and we will now focus on other seats," he added after cancelling a press conference in Pongsu Seribu today.

"Yes, my name will still be on the ballot paper. If due to some dissatisfaction people still want to cast their votes for me, there is nothing I can about it," the state PAS Youth chief added.

Asked if PAS would now assist the PKR candidate Chegubard, Yusni said arrangements could be made if he requested.

In Kepala Batas, state PAS Youth deputy head Afnan Hanim Taib Azimuddin is contesting against Reezal Merican Naina Merican, the Umno Youth Information chief.

Meanwhile, PAS state commissioner Salleh Man (left) said PAS and PKR would work together to ensure their one goal - that Umno loses in this general election - is achieved.

In a statement published by the party's media organ, Harakah, Salleh said: "I did my duty to ensure that the seat is contested by PAS, but then the central leadership - which has higher wisdom in these matters - has decided otherwise.

"We hope everyone will abide by this decision."

Salleh urged the central leadership to visit Penang and try to ease tension among the party's members and supporters in Sungai Aceh.

"The leaders must come to calm the situation and unite all sectors, especially members of the two parties, so that we can point our bullets at the enemy and not at ourselves," he added.

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