

**Umno: Is PKR getting rid of Malay leaders?**  
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Penang Umno liason chief Zainal Abidin Osman has questioned if PKR is trying to get rid of Malay leaders within the party.

He raised the query, noting that some PKR Malay leaders had lost their division chief positions against non-Malays.

He particularly cited the divisions of Tanjung and Bayan Baru where state executive councillor Abdul Malik Kassim and Deputy Chief Minister I Rashid Hasnon (left) lost to former Penang Municipal Councillor Ng Chek Siang and Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzin respectively.

"The failure of Malay leaders to retain or win the post of division chiefs in several places in Penang raises the question if there's is a process in the party to get rid of them," Zainal alleged.

In an immediate response, state PKR chief Mansor Othman said in every poll there were winners and losers, and such results were to be expected.

"Saying there is a process to get rid of Malay leaders in PKR is a wild accusation - there seems to be an intention by Umno to incite racial tension," he said.

"I sense a feeling of jealousy and envy in Umno leaders for being left out, or for not being able to enjoy such democracy within their party," he added.

Low voter turnout

Zainal also criticised PKR for its low voter turnout at the Permatang Pauh internal polls over the weekend, although the party's defacto leader Anwar Ibrahim and president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail are from there.

He said this showed members are losing interest in the party.

"Only 240 (or four percent) came out to vote although the division has 6,900 members. This shows that the interest of PKR members in attending their own party polls is weakening," Zainal noted in a statement today.

To this, PKR Permatang Pauh division chief Dr Afif Bahardin (left) said that the party cannot force members to come out and vote as it practices "direct democracy".

He added that a similar turnout was noted in the party's 2010 polls but PKR still went on to win the Seberang Jaya state seat which is under the Permatang Pau constituency.

"If he feels that PKR is losing touch; we wouldn't have won the last GE13 - retaining Permatang Pau and snatching Seberang Jaya from Umno," said the Penang executive councilor.

"This time around, party elections in Penang involved all divisions, this shows people are interested to be part of PKR to contribute to the party and nation," added Afif, who is also Seberang Jaya assemblyman.

'No hand in chaos'

Meanwhile, Zainal denied that Umno had a hand in the chaos at the PKR Nibong Tebal polls on Sunday, where voting was eventually suspended pending a probe.

Fresh polls, where Mansor (right) will contest against incumbent chief Makhtar Shapiee and a relatively unknown member Sanjeeviramah Subramani, will be held on May 17.

Zainal said the accusations that Umno was responsible for the chaos were "slanderous, baseless and malicious" and were uttered to cover up the party's own problems.

"PKR is a party of disappointed leaders and members who failed to achieve their political ambitions, who did not get a place or position or benefit personally while they were in Umno.

"The rakyat should be aware and reject such leaders and political parties like PKR," he stressed.

Zainal alleged that there were many irregularities in the polls like a questionable members' list which resulted in the chaos, which showed the party's administrative weaknesses in handling the voting process.

He noted that there were 17 divisions throughout the country, including Nibong Tebal, which have to conduct fresh polls.

"They failed to manage a small party, how can they manage and administer a country?" Zainal asked.

"Actually PKR is unqualified to question the ability of the Election Commission to manage the general elections or by-elections, when it is clear that PKR's election committee failed to handle the party's polls where there are less voters compared to the GE," he added.

Mansor admitted that there are some problems in the PKR polls but swift action had been taken to rectify the situation.

"On the whole, PKR must be commended and not condemned for trying to allow the spirit of democracy to flourish by conducting direct elections," added the Nibong Tebal MP.

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