

PKR eyes 60 parliamentary and 120 state seats
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PKR is eyeing to contest in 60 parliamentary and 120 state seats in the forthcoming general election, its election bureau chief and vice president Azmin Ali revealed today.

He told party delegates attending the annual congress in Seremban that these seats - termed as 'focus seats' - have been identified by the party.

"We will negotiate the seat allocations with PAS and DAP as early as next week," said Azmin in his winding-up speech on the debates by the party delegates.

Although Azmin refused to elaborate on where these seats were located, it is believed that they will be in Penang, Selangor and Sabah.

Previously Azmin told malaysiakini in an interview that the three states were the 'front-line states' for the party in the next general election, which some pundits predicted will be called as early as August.

Review the formula

PKR, which was formed in 1999 (known as Keadilan then), has only one parliamentary seat at present - held by its president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail in Permatang Pauh - after its poor performance in the 2004 general election. The party's parliamentary representation was slashed from five to one in the last national polls.

In his speech today, Azmin said the seats have been identified based on several factors such as its winability, as well as the preparation of the PKR election machinery on the ground for those seats.

He told the delegates that the party was also seeking to revise the seats distribution formula which has been used in the past two general elections in the allocation talks with its opposition allies.

"The Chinese-majority seats need not be necessarily contested by the DAP only. We also want to contest in those seats with over 80 percent Chinese voters," he said.

He added the same would apply to Malay-dominated seats which had been previously contested by PAS.

He added that the party's election committee was gearing up for the general election and in the midst of identifying suitable candidates for the seats.

Azmin also pointed out that the party needed to launch more training sessions for its election workers, including polling and counting agents, to prevent unfair tactics employed by the BN.

The majority of the PKR delegates who took part in the debate today voiced concerns that the party was not well-prepared in facing the next general election, which is not due till April 2009 but largely predicted to be called as early as August this year.

Avoid three-cornered fight

In a press conference later, Azmin said the number of seats he revealed today were identified by its state leaders based on the opposition parties' negotiation at the state level over the last two month.

Elaborating on why PKR sought to revise the previous seats distribution formula, he admitted that it has been hard for the party to win in mixed-constituent seats, which were mostly allocated to his party during the opposition's seat talks.

Most of the traditional mixed seats are BN's strongholds.

"It has been harder (to win) in mixed-area seats although of course, there is a mood of swing currently... We don't want to negotiate on the pretext of traditional seats, we want to win," Azmin said bluntly.

Asked on how he sees the chances of the formula to be reviewed, he said it will rely on the talks with the top leaders of DAP next week and PAS after the party's muktamar (annual meet) next weekend.

Noting that some of the seats PKR eyeing this time had a three-corned fight in the last general election, Azmin was nevertheless optimistic this can be avoided this time around as all opposition parties have a strong consensus to have a straight fight.

"We will not repeat that (three-cornered fight)," he said.

PKR advisor Anwar Ibrahim said the party will explain on why it sought contest those seats but stressed that to reach a consensus on the matter was essential.

"We always think Malay-majority seats should be PAS', Chinese-majority seats should go to DAP but I don't think this should be made as a definite rule in all cases," he told a press conference later.

PKR is the second opposition party that revealed the number of seats the party was targeting. DAP had earlier said it identified 54 parliamentary and 115 state seats to be contested in the next general election pending the seats negotiation with PKR.

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