

Chua Jui Meng appointed Johor PKR chief
Malaysiakini.com
July 12, 2010

Former health minister and former MCA vice-president Chua Jui Meng has been appointed as the Johor PKR liaison chief.

Party secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution in a statement said the decision was made by the PKR political bureau last Wednesday.

The decision comes as hardly a surprise, as the Muar politician and former challenger to the MCA presidency is still a popular figure in Johor.

"Chua (left) will begin work immediately. We welcome Chua to the post and we are confident that his appointment would help strengthen the Johor PKR organisation in preparing for the impending general election," Saifuddin said.

The former health minister takes over from Anuar Salleh as Johor PKR chief.

When he was in MCA, Chua was MP for Bakri for more than two decades.

He had twice challenged for the MCA's presidency, the most recent being in 2008 when he stood against Ong Tee Keat.

Chua has recently been embroiled in controversy when two state awards given to him by the previous Johor Sultan were revoked.

Starting from zero

The 67-year-old lawyer is seen to play a pivotal role in ensuring PKR makes headway in Johor, an Umno stronghold.

He admits making PKR's presence felt in Johor is not an easy task, because Pakatan is starting from zero as it did not win a single seat in the 2008 general election.

"So the situation cannot be worse than that," he quipped, when interviewed by Malaysiakini.

"I have been in MCA, I know Johor is the fortress of Umno and MCA. It's the most difficult state in peninsular to score against BN, but it also offers the greatest reward because it has 26 parliamentary seats, the second biggest number after Sarawak."

When asked how many seats he targeted to win, he declined to give a number, but said he wanted to understand the situation in the state first.

On the Johor PKR relationship, he said there had been a few meetings already, but felt he needed to motivate them to move things along faster.

On the Bakri seat, which he held when he was in the MCA, he said it was not whether he wanted it or not, the final decision lay with the Pakatan leadership.

"I am not thinking of which seat to contest. I am focused on thinking of how to lead Johor PKR, how do I be an effective leader and how to get the members to work together as a

fighting unit. I am prepared to take the challenge and I will do my best."

On his relationship with the Johor palace, Chua replied that it had said it is above politics. He hoped it would honour its word, because the ruler of the state is the ruler for all its people.

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