

Bayan Baru a hot seat since Zahrain's defection
Malaysiakini.com
July 20, 2010

The Bayan Baru seat is up for grabs as MP Zahrain Mohamed Hashim, who quit PKR to become a BN-friendly Independent in February, will no longer contest on a party ticket.

Several hopefuls are already making a beeline for the division leadership position.

Bayan Baru division acting chief Tan Seng Keat (left) said Bayan Baru is deemed "a hot seat" because those who control the division have a say on who will contest in the next polls, highly speculated to be called early next year.

"It's true that many are aiming for the seat. As Zahrain has left, that seat is now empty and anyone has a chance to grab it," he told Malaysiakini.

"Lobbying has already started, and since this is also the party's election year, a lot of leaders are hoping for the chance to grab this seat."

Tan, however, declined to comment or speculate on who could be vying for the position, adding that he himself had "a long way to go" before thinking of occupying the parliamentary seat.

Candidates are expected to face an uphill task when lobbying, as the Bayan Baru division alone has about 5,000 registered members.

There are other reasons why Bayan Baru is popular - it is located next to Bayan Lepas, where the Penang airport is, and the town is part of the Penang Cybercity Phase 1 launched in 2005.

The parliamentary constituency includes Batu Uban, Pantai Jerejak and Batu Maung.

Division leaders remain cautious, though, because former supporters of Zahrain (right) may cause an upset and encourage defection from the party before elections.

The other hot seats are Nibong Tebal and Kulim-Bandar Bahru, respectively held by PKR-turned-Independent MPs Tan Tee Beng and Zulkifli Noordin.

This offers an opportunity for members to take advantage of the party's new direct voting system, to put in the kinds of leaders they want in their divisions and the central committee, where previously the decision rested with only a handful of delegates.

PKR is the first political party in Malaysia to introduce direct voting, following amendments to its constitution last year.

From this month up to the party's annual congress in November, "a few hundred thousand" members nationwide will be involved in direct voting.

The 200 divisions are expected to vote for central leaders in November.

It is learnt that leaders vying for central committee posts are already campaigning among

division members.

For example, central committee member Zaid Ibrahim is scheduled to be in Penang next month for a huge fund-raising dinner, which will see the presence of PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim lending his support.

Division polls starting Sept

Penang PKR has started gearing up for its 20,000 members to vote directly for division exco members.

penang state assembly 181108 abdul halim hussain PKR state secretary Abdul Halim Hussain (right) said elections will be conducted in all divisions from Sept 17 - 26.

He said all division leaders have been briefed on the voting process and are in the process of selecting election officers (EOs) for the exercise.

They are tasked with preventing money politics and election fraud within the party's voting system.

"EOs are selected based on their background. They must be professional and credible, plus they must not be contesting in the said divisions as they are the ones to monitor the election process, just like the Election Commission," he said.

"We are currently conducting training for election officers, and each division will nominate two persons for the job."

However, due to manpower shortage election officers may be required to work in divisions other than their own.

"This is allowed as long as they are not vying for any positions in that particular division," said Abdul Halim.

To prevent election fraud or the presence of 'phantom' voters, the party will be displaying their membership list or 'electoral roll' in the division offices soon.

"We have 20,000 registered members, and we are going to publicise our 'electoral roll' so that any protest can be done now, until the 26th of this month, " said Abdul Halim.

"If anyone wants to challenge the electoral roll, please do so now as the list will be finalised on Aug 2.

This will ensure transparency as members are given a chance to protest, complain and confirm their membership in a particular branch."

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/137829>