

Proxy war in S'gor PKR divisions?
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NEWS ANALYSIS It was smooth sailing in the PKR polls nomination process until the focus shifted to bigger divisions in Selangor and Perak, bringing in arguments, fistfights, complaints and vandalism.

The reason lies in the sheer number in each division. Selangor, according to secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution, has 108,000 members in its 22 divisions, or 33 percent of the entire party membership.

A division like Kapar with nearly 6,000 members, can equal that of an entire state like Perlis or Terengganu.

With PKR's one-member-one-vote policy, these vote-laden divisions became the holy grail for the factions waging their proxy war and vying for influence in the upcoming polls.

Among the 37 divisions which held their AGM over the weekend, those that saw trouble were Kapar, Petaling Jaya Utara, Petaling Jaya Selatan, Pasir Salak, Teluk Kemang and Subang.

However, the fracas is said to be but the tip of the iceberg as only about 30 percent of members have turned out for the division polls thus far.

It is believed that the factions are holding their cards close to their chests, mobilising just enough supporters to gain control of the divisions, as they gear up for national polls where they will up the ante and come out in full force.

The national polls may see 70 percent of members casting their vote, posing more challenges for election coordinators who are even now struggling to maintain control of the nomination process.

Asked to comment on allegations of factionalism and impropriety, vice-president Mustaffa Kamil Ayub reserved comment.

"I cannot comment offhand, I will only give a statement in one or two days when I have investigated about this issue and found out the problem," he said guardedly.

Vice-president R Sivarasa, when contacted, stressed that any speculation must be "based on facts". He insisted that most problems, like those in his division of Subang, are mere technicalities and not an orchestrated factional fight.

The undeclared war has already claimed heavyweights like Selangor exco Elizabeth Wong (PJ Utara), Kamarul Baharin Abas (Negri Sembilan head) and Mustaffa.

Voting en bloc?

Observers speculate that more giant-killing may occur and that stalwarts like Kelana Jaya deputy division chief Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad and Kuala Selangor head Khalid Ibrahim may lose their posts.

They attribute this to the block-voting practice which is allegedly being manipulated by one faction in the divisional polls and nominations, to set the stage for its own line-up to win the national polls.

Rumours abound of thousands of new members being 'registered' into divisions out of party headquarters, swelling the ranks with those who were reportedly told to vote *en bloc* for pre-selected candidates.

As with the division nominations in Sabah and Sarawak last week, it was reported that in Selangor, so many 'phantom' voters had cast their votes that some divisions ran out of ballot papers.

Such reports, which have led to brawls in some divisions like Kapar and Kota Raja, may lend credence to claims about newly 'inserted' phantom members flooding divisions to vote.

The fires of dissent are said to be further fanned by a former BN heavyweight, who now trolls the divisions to rile up members against the current leadership. The individual is believed to be working in concert with those 'injecting' members into divisions.

Such allegations may not be too far-fetched, with Saifuddin today pointing to 'saboteurs' and 'external infiltration' for the disrupted proceedings over the weekend.

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