

**Three-cornered fight for Machap?**  
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**Beh Lih Yi**

The Machap by-election in Malacca may see a three-cornered fight for the state seat if Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) and DAP field their respective candidates.

The leaders from both opposition parties have been embroiled in a war of words in the Chinese press over this issue for the past few days.

The state seat - a traditional stronghold of the ruling MCA - fell vacant following the death of incumbent Poh Ah Tiam, 55, last Thursday.

Since then, PKR information chief Tian Chua has told the media that his party is 'likely' to contest since Machap is a multi-racial seat

However, DAP is dissatisfied with this as the party contested the seat in the last general election held in 2004.

PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said today the party's political bureau will meet tomorrow to decide on whether to contest.

"Whatever speculations so far, remain as speculations," she said when contacted.

Wan Azizah added that she has spoken to a few DAP leaders on an informal basis but an official stand will be reached at tomorrow's meeting.

Explaining further, she said several factors will be considered in the decision-making process.

This includes the argument that Machap was initially contested by PKR in the 1999 general elections. The seat was contested by the DAP in the last polls after its electorate structure changed.

Apart from this, the PKR president said the party will also take into account its boycott of the Batu Talam by-election in January.

PKR, together with its opposition ally PAS, boycotted the Batu Talam by-election in Pahang to press for electoral reforms.

Wan Azizah refused to comment on what is being perceived as an 'inconsistent' stand by the party following remarks that PKR may contest in Machap.

### **Meeting tonight**

Meanwhile, the DAP central executive committee - the party's highest decision-making body - is scheduled to meet tonight to discuss the details about the by-election.

DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng when contacted said he will issue a brief statement on the outcome tomorrow.

"More details will only be made available after Poh's funeral (tomorrow)," he said. "I had said (earlier) that we (DAP) will not boycott any by-election in seats we had contested before," he said, adding that he has not been approached by PKR leaders on the matter so far.

The Election Commission (EC) is scheduled make an announcement on the nomination and polling dates for the Machap state seat tomorrow while Barisan Nasional is expected to announce its candidate on Friday.

So far, five candidates from MCA are said to have been short-listed. Topping the list is Lai Meng Chong, who is Human Resources Minister Dr Fong Chan Onn's political aide.

As for PKR, Chua and newcomer Ginie Lim - who both hail from Malacca - are being rumoured to be in the running. Lim, 26, is the PKR media coordinator.

DAP's Liou Cheng Kuang who took on Poh in the last election may contest the seat again. Liou, who polled 1,285 votes in the 2004 election was defeated by a majority of 4,202 votes.

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