

**Political rookie awaits decision tomorrow**  
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**Andrew Ong**

He may be a household name in the bumiputera corporate circle and a celebrated son of Kuala Selangor, but Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) treasurer Khalid Ibrahim admits to being the underdog if nominated to contest the forthcoming Ijok by-election.

"I'm still very new at this," confesses Khalid, one of the two candidates shortlisted by the party for the by-election on April 28, which is expected to be a heated contest.

Speaking to malaysiakini on the sidelines of the party's supreme council meeting yesterday, Khalid revealed that even the recent Machap by-election, where PKR played a supporting role, was an eye-opener.

"We ought to be fighting against a political party, not the whole government. The (Barisan Nasional government) made the Public Works Department work 24 hours throughout the campaign," claimed Khalid, who expects even more of the same in Ijok.

"There was no separation of functions between the government and the political party. This is not how a modern democracy works."

Khalid was formerly chief executive of plantation giant Guthrie Group Bhd and group chief executive of the government-linked company Permodalan Nasional Bhd. He was wooed into PKR by close friend, former deputy premier and current party advisor Anwar Ibrahim.

He was immediately appointed treasurer and PKR Selangor chair by president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail after joining last year.

### **Sights set on Ijok**

Although he is a political rookie, party supporters are hopeful that Khalid's colourful resume and personality, will bring the party its first by-election success since Lunas in 2000.

For many supporters, his corporate background comes as a whiff of fresh air. He is a straight talker with no qualms about speaking out on party weaknesses - even to the press.

Should he be nominated to contest the Ijok state seat, his humble beginnings and corporate savvy could sit well with the electorate.

Based on racial composition, Ijok has an interesting voter profile, with about half the electorate being Malay. It also has the second largest Indian electorate in the state at 28 percent.

"It's a semi-urban setting on the fringe of the Klang Valley. Many residents work in the Klang Valley. They are affected by urban issues such as sky rocketing inflation and toll rates," Khalid observed.

"The rural voters, however, yearn for the benefits seen in the Klang Valley. While they hear the Selangor chief minister proclaiming the state as a developed one, they don't see it in

their backyard.”

### **Nalla also being considered**

Another Anwar associate, S Nallakarupan, is the other candidate being considered for the seat. He is a successful businessman, philanthropist and a former high-ranking MIC politician.

After keeping a low-profile for a number of years, Nalla returned to active politics a few months ago when he officially joined PKR.

Party advisor Anwar Ibrahim is expected to make an announcement on the candidate at 8.30pm tomorrow in Batang Berjuntai, although the party election machinery was officially launched last night in Ijok.

“The party will go to the ground to decide the best candidate for the seat... It is not a racial thing but an effort to decide on the best candidate,” he said when met yesterday at the party headquarters.

Barisan Nasional component party MIC is expected to announce its candidate later today - widely tipped to be graduate teacher K Parthiban. Nomination day is fixed for Wednesday.

In the 2004 general election, MIC's S Sivalingam won the seat for the third time by a comfortable majority. The by-election was called following his death on April 4.

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