

Six-way battle in Ijok?
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K Kabilan

Four independent candidates have expressed interest to contest in the Ijok state seat by-election on April 28, according to informed sources.

However, their seriousness in translating this interest into being proper candidates remains uncertain.

With nomination day just 24 hours away, there are two confirmed candidates: Barisan Nasional's MIC member K Parthiban, 38 and Parti Keadilan Rakyat's (PKR) Khalid Ibrahim, 61.

Both Parthiban, until recently a Kuala Selangor district education officer, and Khalid - PKR's Selangor state chief and party treasurer - are locals.

The other possible contenders are businessman K Loganathan, 47, law graduate K Mutharasu, 41, land broker Ali Mohamed and a local Chinese businessman. The four are also locals.

Loganathan, a former MIC member from Shah Alam, was the first among the independents to announce his intention to contest.

His main reason was that BN has failed to develop Ijok and that he was unhappy with the way MIC was dealing with the problems faced by the Indians in the state constituency.

He lives in Klang but was born in Caledonian Estate, near Ijok town.

Subra's ally

Mutharasu is also an ex-MIC member. In fact he was the secretary of the Taman Assam Jawa MIC branch, near Ijok, before it was made defunct by party president S Samy Vellu.

"His father Mugilan is a well-respected figure in this area. He is closely aligned to MIC former deputy president S Subramaniam," said the source.

Mutharasu can rely on votes from Subramaniam's supporters if he contests, added the source.

Subramaniam was defeated by Samy Vellu-backed G Palanivel in last year's party polls for the deputy president's post.

The third independent candidate Ali was born in Kampung Kuantan, near Ijok, and continues to reside here.

A source close to him said Ali is an active DAP member and intends to split the Indian votes to give PKR the edge.

"However he has not received DAP's blessings and this might pose a problem," added the

source.

The other candidate is a well-known 46-year-old Chinese businessman who has been living and conducting his business in Kuala Selangor for the past 27 years. He has also been active in local politics.

Not much is known about this candidate but he has apparently told the locals that he wants to see more progress in Ijok.

Of the four independent candidates, grassroots leaders believes that Mutharasu stands the best chance as he is backed by a prominent person.

Serving the community

However, former Kuala Selangor MIC chief P Thirumoorthy said he will not contest.

The MIC veteran recently quit the party, along with members from 33 branches, after he was overlooked by Samy Vellu as a candidate.

"No, I will not be contesting as an independent. Neither am I backing any of the independent candidates," he told malaysiakini when contacted today.

According to Thirumoorthy, he was a loyal BN member and will always remain so.

"My only grouse is with Samy Vellu. He failed to recognise my efforts for the party in the past 30 years," said the 55-year-old teacher.

He also said his main interest now was to continue serving the community.

He aims to set up an Ijok-based non-governmental organisation that will include professionals and community leaders to work with the Indian community.

"We will highlight issues and grouses of the community to our friends in BN so that the problems of the community are solved," he added.

Thirumoorthy has a large following in Ijok and Kuala Selangor and played an important role in ensuring the Ijok state seat remained in the hands of BN in previous elections.

The state seat fell vacant after the death of MIC incumbent K Sivalingam, 59, on April 4.

Meanwhile an Election Commission official told malaysiakini that at least 14 nomination forms have been taken by potential candidates as of today.

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