

High-powered DAP support for Khalid
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A high-profile delegation of DAP leaders will roll into Ijok tomorrow in a demonstration of opposition unity and support for Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) candidate Khalid Ibrahim.

DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said the party's deputy chairperson Dr Tan Seng Giaw would lead the delegation along with several state leaders.

He added that himself, chairperson Karpal Singh as well as veteran leader Lim Kit Siang would be visiting Ijok to assist in the by-election campaign as and when requested by PKR.

Tomorrow is nomination day in the by-election for the Ijok state seat in Selangor, while polling day will be on April 28.

Only BN and PKR have announced their candidates to date - MIC candidate and graduate teacher K Parthiban, 38, will face PKR national treasurer Khalid, 61. However, unconfirmed press reports indicate the possibility of a six-way battle.

At a press conference in the Parliament lobby today, Lim said the central executive committee held a meeting last night at which the members agreed to stay out of the fray and endorse Khalid's bid to wrest the seat from the BN.

He said the party had consulted its Selangor-level leaders and branch leaders in Ijok, who had earlier requested an Indian candidate be fielded to contest the by-election.

However, Lim said, in the interests of opposition unity, the leaders agreed to support PKR, as well as accede to its request for party leaders to attend the nomination process.

"Even though PKR only sent leaders based in Malacca to participate in the nomination day (proceedings) in Machap, the DAP CEC had decided to send high-level delegation to Ijok tomorrow," he said.

The DAP, he said, is aware that the close co-operation between the two parties in Ijok will be used by BN to "promote their lies of a tie-up between DAP with PAS when there is none".

'Attachment to Ijok'

PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who was at the press conference, reiterated that Khalid had been selected on the basis of seniority and eligibility and that ethnicity did not enter the picture.

"A by-election is not like general election. The choice was made not based on race but to give the people of Ijok a chance to vote for PKR and, as such, to give us a chance to contribute to them," she said.

Khalid, who also present, said he is the right candidate because of both a political and personal attachment to the small town, about an hour's drive from Kuala Lumpur.

"Although Selangor is a developed state, Ijok is still under-developed. I will do all I can to develop Ijok if I am chosen as their (voters') representative," he said.

Asked how he is going to persuade the Indian Malaysian voters to support him, Khalid said: "It must be stressed to the voters that anyone can play a role in the situation, and not just a candidate of a particular race.

"I don't believe the concept that only an Indian representative will help Indians. This concept can be debated especially when there were complaints about late (state assemblyperson and MIC incumbent) K Sivalingam who apparently never did anything for the Indians in the area."

The seat fell vacant upon Sivalingam's death from a heart attack on arrival at Chennai international airport on April 4.

Slur rejected

Both Wan Azizah and Lim refuted allegations levelled in some quarters that opposition parties are more racist than the ruling BN coalition.

"DAP has two Indian MPs and one of them, Karpal Singh is the party's national chairperson," said Lim.

"We do field Indian candidates in elections. They cannot blame us if they do not win the seats, it's not our fault."

Wan Azizah dismissed the allegations, saying PKR had fielded Indian candidates in the 2004 general election.

"We fielded 14 Indian candidates, so they cannot say that we're racist and that we favour only those of a certain race," she added.

The allegations stemmed from PKR's choice of Khalid over businessman-cum-politician S Nallakarupan, who joined the party last year.

The latter's supporters, who had been lobbying for an Indian candidate, were disappointed with the decision and there has been talk of a boycott.

However, Nallakarupan has pledged to support Khalid's campaign.

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