

Party polls: Indian leaders still to shine
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As the PKR elections go into the final lap, the Indian candidates hoping to make a bang in the polls appear to have fizzled out.

In the race for vice-presidency, the calibre of the Indian candidates is unquestionable, with four out of five being public representatives.

after permatang pauh 916 an oppotunity to change forum 100908 sivarasa rasiahThe more notable names are Subang MP R Sivarasa, Kapar MP S Manikavasagam, Padang Serai MP N Gobalakrishnan and Selangor exco Xavier Jayakumar.

But before entering the race proper a few months back, the division among them was obvious.

It was almost too easy to give Sivarasa (left) and Xavier (below) - a lawyer and a former dentist respectively - the 'elitist' tag, in contrast with the 'grassroots leaders' - Manikavasagam and Gobalakrishnan.

Gobalakrishnan was the former MIC Youth secretary until 1999 before leaving for PKR while Manikavasagam used to be a 'recycling centre proprietor'. Also high on the list of contenders is R Suresh Kumar, who is an aide to PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

But one thing to note is that although the two 'teams' have appeared at functions together, it is too simplistic to say that they are working together.

xavier jayakumar pc 190110 01Indeed, the fact that they are not pairing up to work may explain their lacklustre performance in the polls with 57 divisions to go.

An insider attributed the highest ranking candidate in the VP race from the community, V Gopalakrishnan - trailing at fifth place by 1,230 votes - to their disunity.

The top four will be elected into office and three more appointed.

"The Indian members are still definitely the kingmakers in this party election but they are still split among themselves. They don't vote en bloc, which is a good thing for race relations.

NONE"Although Xavier and Sivarasa are considered to be in (deputy president candidate Azmin Ali's) team, they have their own supporters. Also Gobalakrishnan and Manikavasagam (far right) cannot get along with a lot of people.

"In fact, Gobalakrishnan and Manikavasagam have the same pool of supporters so the votes are split among them," said the well-placed party source.

Voting not on racial lines

Many party insiders have also dismissed claims that voting is still along racial lines.

azlanAlthough Gobalakrishnan is at a distant fifth spot followed by Xavier in sixth place,

Sivarasa (eighth), Suresh Kumar (11th) and Manikavasagam (15th), it should still be noted that party strategic director Tian Chua is managing an impressive second place with a 9,524 vote tally.

The Teja assemblyman and aspiring deputy Youth chief Chang Lih Kang, also rubbished the notion that the members are casting ballots according to skin colour.

"Even my votes and the votes for (running mate and Youth chief candidate Badrul Hisham Shaharin) are quite close.

"Although there may be some who are still voting according to racial lines, they do not make the majority of the party. This is quite insignificant actually," he said when contacted by Malaysiakini.

He also said that with two more days of voting to go starting from Saturday, anything can still happen in the vice-presidential race.

"The 1,200 vote-majority (separating fifth from fourth place) is actually quite slim. Anything can happen," he said.

NONE In fact, Gobalakrishnan (right) is also hoping for that 'something' to happen.

"I'm hoping that the members will come out in full force to vote. There's not more that I can do. I expected to be in a better position, but well, what to do?" he said ruefully.

But when asked if it was a race between him and Xavier, both clearly from opposing camps, he said it wasn't. And almost in the same breath, he was upbeat about his chances.

"This weekend, I'll make it into the top four. I still have my own grassroots support in the party. I have served the party for 12 years and I still have a lot of friends who were in the MIC whom I brought over (into PKR)," he said.

But even if none of the Indian candidates make the cut this weekend, it is likely that at least one of them will be appointed as VP.

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