

**Anwar eyes possible Kulim by-election**  
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Having lost the opportunity to contest the Kuala Kangsar parliamentary seat last month, PKR MCPX de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim has now set his eyes on Kulim-Bandar Baharu for his political comeback.

Early last month, Umno Wanita chief Rafidah Aziz got to keep her Kuala Kangsar seat when the High Court dismissed a petition challenging her victory in the March 8 general election.

anwar ibrahim freed from police ipk detention pc 170708 09Anwar, who is seeking to return to Parliament after an absence of 10 years, was banking on a by-election there should the petition, which was lodged by a disgruntled voter, succeed.

He had earlier told Malaysiakini that Kuala Kangsar was one of the four seats which he had set his sights on.

Now, the opposition leader will have another chance when the court hears the petition filed by losing Kulim-Bandar Baharu candidate beginning this Sunday.

Interestingly, Kulim-Bandar Baharu neighbours Anwar's former seat of Permatang Pauh in Penang, which is currently by his wife, Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Anwar has been banned from holding political office as a result of his corruption conviction, causing him to miss the March general election. The five-year ban expired two months ago.

Judge Balia Yusoff Wahi has set July 20-24 to hear the Kulim-Bandar Baharu election petition after dismissing preliminary objection raised by the winning candidate Zulkifli Nordin (PKR) to strike out the petition.

The petition was filed by Umno candidate Abdul Aziz Sheikh Fadzir on the grounds that Zulkifli had failed to submit his statement of expenditure from his 2004 general election campaign.

Under the Election Act, candidates who do not submit their statement of expenditure to the Election Commission can be disqualified from contesting in future elections.

In the 2004 general election, Zulkifli contested the Kuala Langat parliamentary seat in Selangor but lost to Umno's Dr Shafie Mohd Salleh.

In the election petition, Abdul Aziz also claimed that the returning officer had failed to act against Zulkifli despite having documents confirming his failure to submit the statement of expenditure.

A Malay-majority seat

bandar kulim bharu kedah parliament seat results 180708Should a by-election is called, which must be held within 60 days of the court decision, it is expected that Zulkifli would make way for his party boss to contest.

It is unclear whether Umno would again field Abdul Aziz, but the politician will not go down

well with the minority Chinese voters after his infamous remarks eight years ago.

Abdul Aziz, then Umno Youth deputy chief, had threatened to burn down the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall building over the controversy involving lobby group Suqiu's 1999 election demands.

The Kulim-Bandar Baharu is a majority Malay seat, of which 69.5 percent are Malays, 18.6 percent Chinese and 11.7 percent Indians.

In the 2008 general election, Zulkifli won the seat, which has 51,995 voters, by a margin of 5,583.

Zulkifli told Malaysiakini that he was confident in winning the court case. According to him, Abdul Aziz had filed the complaint under the wrong section of the Election Act.

And when asked if he would offer his seat to Anwar should there be a by-election, Zulkifli said he would do so.

"All PKR MPs have earlier pledged to give up their seats to make way for Anwar - including mine, Permatang Pauh, Bandar Tun Razak and Gombak."

Meanwhile, Abdul Aziz, when contacted, said that he was ready to face Anwar in the event a by-election was called for the seat.

"I will ask the voters here if they want a glamour seeking superstar or a hardworking representative to represent them," he said.

He added that Umno has managed to solve its internal problems and thus stood a good chance of winning the seat.

Anwar will need to regain political momentum after being accused of sodomy by a former aide, and fighting a by-election would be one way to rally the opposition.

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