

By-election: Arif Shah is BN's choice
Malaysiakini.com
Aug 13, 2008
Beh Lih Yi

The long wait is finally over! Barisan Nasional tonight announced its candidate for the Permatang Pauh by-election.
MCPX

arif shah omar shah bn umno candidate for permatang pauh by election 140808 02The coalition will place its hopes on Seberang Jaya assemblyperson Arif Shah Omar Shah to go head on against PKR leader Anwar Ibrahim in the Aug 26 by-election.

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak made the announcement tonight after launching BN's election machinery in Seberang Jaya.

Najib, who is also the Umno deputy president and BN deputy head, introduced the 52-year-old candidate to about 1,500 BN leaders and supporters.

Arif Shah, a two-term state representative, was in tears when he was announced as the candidate (see photo below).

The Umno man can speak fluent Mandarin, an advantage obviously seen by the BN as a move to win back Chinese voters.

A rare BN practice

Najib later told reporters that Arif Shah was picked because he had successfully defended the Seberang Jaya seat in the last general election, which was an exception when almost all other Umno candidates had tumbled.

permatang pauh 2008 results for state and state seats 140808The Seberang Jaya state constituency is one of three state seats under Permatang Pauh. The other two - Permatang Pasir and Penanti - are presently held by PAS and PKR respectively.

On the rare BN practice to select a standing state representative to contest for a by-election, Najib said "this is not a BN tradition but there is nothing to stop us from making this decision as it is not against (BN) constitution".

"There are a few opposition leaders who also contested on both parliamentary and state seats in the last general election," he said.

A confident candidate

Arif Shah said that he was confident of wrestling the seat away from PKR. He however added that he might not be able to do so with an overwhelming majority.

"Anwar may be good in one thing but not everything. People need a service-oriented MP," he added.

The seat fell vacant after its incumbent Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail vacated it on July 31 to allow her husband Anwar to contest as a way back to the Parliament.

Nomination is on Aug 16, this coming Saturday.

arif shah omar shah bn umno candidate for permatang pauh by election 140808 01 Arif Shah was among the front-runners to be picked by Umno to contest this by-election. The other favourite was party state treasurer and former deputy minister of rural development Zainal Abidin Osman.

Local residents told Malaysiakini that Arif Shah had "multiracial and youthful appeal" and was "well-liked beyond communal boundaries, are enterprising and untainted clean personality".

Arif Shah's ace in the sleeve is that, he is familiar with Anwar's political style, having served as Permatang Pauh Youth chief when Anwar headed the Umno division there.

There are 58,459 voters - of which 490 are postal voters - as of July 31 at this constituency.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/87758>