

**PM: Arif Shah our best man**  
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today endorsed his coalition's choice of candidate, Arif Shah Omar Shah, to take on MCPX de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim in the high-stakes, much-watched Permatang Pauh by-election.

umno special briefing abdullah ahmad badawi announce resignation date 100708 05Abdullah, who is also president of Umno, the backbone of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, described Arif Shah as a "staunch loyalist", who has "never created any problems" before.

"He also has good standing with the voters there. As such, I feel that he is our best man to wrest the Permatang Pauh seat now," said Abdullah told reporters after opening the Federal Territory Hawkers and Petty Traders Congress.

The Permatang Pauh by-election is seen as a litmus test for both Anwar and Abdullah's ruling coalition.

Although the opposition icon is favoured to win, Umno-BN is fighting hard to cut his majority not only to save embarrassment but also to prove that its own popularity is still intact despite a recent strings of scandals involving corruption and abuse of power.

Arif Shah, a two-term state assemblyman, can speak fluent Mandarin, an advantage observers say may help him to win favour with the Chinese voters.

Although Malays form 67 percent of the voting bank there, Umno believes their decision will be split right down line, meaning both Anwar and Arif Shah would have to depend on non-Malay votes to win.

### **BN lacks candidates**

arif shah omar shah bn umno candidate for permatang pauh by election 140808 07Arif Shah's selection, announced by Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak last night, was not a surprise to Umno insiders as he was known to be on the final shortlist, but the opposition alliance has slammed the decision.

"BN lacks not only ideas, but candidates to fight Anwar," said Lim Guan Eng, Penang Chief Minister and DAP secretary general.

"BN and Umno took so long to unveil their candidate and when they did, they had to choose an existing assemblyperson."

Permatang Pauh is a parliamentary seat, but under Malaysian rules an individual can hold both state and parliamentary seats at the same time.

According to Najib, Arif Shah was picked because he had successfully defended the Seberang Jaya seat in the March general election, a disastrous time for the ruling coalition when many Umno-BN candidates lost their seats.

There are altogether three state seats in the Permatang Pauh constituency - Seberang Jaya, Permatang Pasir and Penanti. The last two are currently controlled by opposition parties PAS and PKR respectively.

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