

BN stars camp in to ensure victory
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The by-election is living up to the hype as mother of all by-elections as far as the Barisan Nasional coalition is concerned.
MCPX

While the prime minister was nonchalant when asked of the possibility of Anwar Ibrahim returning to parliament after Aug 26, the number of big names in this area betrayed him.

permatang pauh 230808 posters 9Since the start of the campaigning period, the deputy prime minister has almost made this mixed area his second home, with almost daily visits.

Add ministers from health, sports, education, higher education, housing and local government and the number of deputies, Ahmad Abdullah Badawi can even hold a cabinet meeting in Permatang Pauh if he wants to.

Without forgetting state chiefs like Musa Aman and Muhamad Hasan, and former state leaders such as Dr Koh Tsu Koon, the cast is star-studded.

And that is without even counting the various former MPs and ministers. Even former PKR and now Umno leaders have joined in the party to wrest this "unimportant" seat.

permatang pauh 230808 posters 5At the flats in Taman Tun Hussein this afternoon, the country's premier returned to lend his candidate a helping hand.

"I had many choices for this seat," he told the crowd of mainly Chinese.

"I had former anak Permatang Pauh who now reside in Kuala Lumpur. There were anak Permatang Pauh who now do business elsewhere.

"But we chose Arif Shah (Mohd Shah) as our candidate because we want someone who will be based here and will work here," said Abdullah to partisan approval of the neighborhood.

BN's heavy presence

In contrast, for bookmakers' choice to win Anwar and Pakatan Rakyat leaders have had less time to spend in Permatang Pauh.

Apart from the nomination day when PAS big guns Hadi Awang and Nik Aziz Nik Mat and DAP's Lim Kit Siang and son were present, they had yet to re-enter the stage since the campaign started.

permatang pauh by election nomination day 160808 36Nevertheless, Hadi is expected to debut at Taman Gua Perahu tonight while Nik Aziz is also scheduled to take part tomorrow night.

DAP leaders however are expected to be away, until tomorrow night at least, as they are currently holding their party congress in Kuala Lumpur.

PKR and several second-line leaders from DAP and PAS have nevertheless worked the campaign trail with their daily morning visits and nightly ceramah.

Barisan Nasional's heavy presence in Permatang Pauh, belies the fact that they need this victory as much as Anwar.

Although a BN defeat in Permatang Pauh here will not impact national politics much nor change the landscape of Penang's politics for now, Abdullah knows all too well that another loss here five months after the general election could mean that sentiments towards his coalition have not changed.

And that cannot be a good sign for the premier nor the ruling coalition.

For Anwar, a win here is just the first step towards the much coveted premiership but for BN, it could well be the first step towards relegation.

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