

Bkt Selambau: New face Manikumar is PKR candidate
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Pakatan Rakyat leader Anwar Ibrahim today announced new face S Manikumar as the candidate for the Bukit Selambau by-election on April 7.

Anwar made the announcement this morning at the PKR operation centre in Sungai Lalang at Bukit Selambau, in front of a crowd numbering about 500.

Also present were Kedah Menteri Besar Azizan Abdul Razak and several PKR leaders, including Padang Serai MP N Gobalakrishnan, Kapar MP S Manikavasagam and PKR's Kedah state exco member Tan Wei Shu.

A total newcomer to politics, Manikumar, 35, is a surprise candidate for the crucial by-election.

Manikumar, who has been an ordinary party member since 2007, said that he would be representing all races as the candidate for PKR.

Anwar meanwhile said that Manikumar was selected from a field of 15 potential candidates.

Manikumar, a business degree holder from UUM, is a car dealer in Sungai Pasir, Padang Temesu, located within Bukit Selambau. He is also a resident of Bukit Selambau.

He will face Barisan Nasional's S Ganesan, who is from MIC, and a number of independents in the by-election.

It is not clear how many independents will eventually be contesting the seat with more than seven having indicated their intention to vie for the state constituency.

One of them will be local boy R Loganathan who told Malaysiakini that he had no intentions of pulling out at the last minute.

"I have paid my deposit to the Election Commission and I fully intent to fight this contest," said the contractor who has no political experience.

He added that he was contesting in the by-election with the intention of helping the Indian community in the constituency. Indians make about 30 percent of the total number of voters.

Apart from Loganathan, three other independents are believed to have paid their deposits to the Election Commission.

The seat fell vacant following the sudden resignation of V Arumugam, citing pressure from BN for him to defect to the ruling coalition. Arumugam won the seat as an independent and subsequently joined PKR.

It is learnt that Manikumar was an Arumugam-backed candidate for the by-election.

Malaysiakini reported on Wednesday that Manikumar would PKR's candidate for the by-election.

Party members unhappy with candidate

Anwar's announcement was however greeted by howls of protest from some PKR supporters.

Eyewitnesses told Malaysiakini that these supporters - numbering about 20 - were from the Merbok

division, which had previously backed its division committee member, K Masilamani.

"They are unhappy with Manikumar's nomination as he is an unknown and was not a local born but someone who was born in Alor Star," said a local PKR leader.

Before the announcement today, Masilamani, a Sungai Petani municipal councillor, was among three frontrunners to be the party's candidate.

The other two were Sungai Petani PKR division member Dr R Krishnamoorthy and the division's committee member S Sritharan.

Anwar had to step in to diffuse the situation and held talks with several local Indian leaders, including Masilamani, urging them to ask their supporters to cool down.

Soon after the brief meeting which lasted less than 30 minutes, these local leaders came out and urged their supporters - now numbering about 100 - to disperse, which they did.

Meanwhile, when contacted, Krishnamoorthy expressed surprise with the party's choice of candidate. However he said that he would support Manikumar.

"I have no objections although I was taken by surprise. I will remain loyal to the party and support Manikumar. I think the voters will accept him," he said.

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