

**Penanti: Umno political bureau meets, no announcement yet**  
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is expected to announce if Barisan Nasional will contest in the Penanti by-election at a function in Sabah tonight.

The premier will be having dinner with Sabah BN leaders in the state capital of Kota Kinabalu.

However, the much-anticipated announcement did not take place at the dinner.

This afternoon, Najib chaired the Umno political bureau meeting at his office in Putrajaya instead of the party headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

Initially, it was reported that the meeting was held to discuss the party's stand on the May 31 Penanti by-election after Najib previously stated that BN might not contest if there is consensus from all the component parties.

However, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin later told reporters that the matter was not discussed.

The Penang seat fell vacant following the resignation of former deputy chief minister 1 Mohammad Fairus Khairuddin.

The state seat comes under the Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency, which is the fortress of Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

### **Sixth by-election**

This will be the sixth by-election since the March 8 polls, with BN having already being defeated in four, and their prospects in Penanti are far from being bright.

Of the five by-elections, four held in the peninsula were won by the opposition. BN managed to retain its Batang Ai seat in Sarawak.

Another significant blow to the newly-minted prime minister was BN's defeat in the Bukit Gantang parliamentary by-election which was touted as a referendum on the Najib-masterminded political coup in Perak.

To add salt to the wound, the victor was none other than ousted menteri besar Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin himself.

While Najib is not in favour of contesting Penanti, his mentor and former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad has openly declared that BN should do battle. MIC president S Samy Vellu has also pushed for a contest.

Najib had argued that too many by-elections would be a waste of public funds, but observers pointed out that he was more concerned about opposition pressure on BN by maintaining its winning streak.

On April 29, PKR named its Penang deputy chief Mansor Othman as its candidate for the Penanti by-election.

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