

BN, Pakatan fine-tuning candidate lists, likely more new faces
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By Jahabar Sadiq

KUALA LUMPUR, July 23 — New faces are expected to dominate the candidate lists from both Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) as both court the nearly three million new voters in the coming elections slated as early as this September, sources say.

The Malaysian Insider understands that BN is drawing professionals from a number of agencies, including Putrajaya's efficiency unit PEMANDU, in its quest to regain the two-thirds parliamentary majority and states lost to PR in Election 2008. PR component parties have received hundreds of resumes from those who think they can do a better job as lawmakers.

"Datuk Seri Najib Razak is going through the list a few times. Each seat has at least four possible candidates and he wants the best, the winnable there," a BN source told The Malaysian Insider, using the prime minister's term for those capable of winning seats.

Najib, who chairs the 13-member ruling coalition, has told the component parties that seat allocation will now be based on potentially-winning candidates rather than the previous formula of sharing seats as the MCA, MIC and Gerakan did badly in Election 2008.

Among the changes are the BN chairman personally selecting and recommending candidates for those parties apart from his Umno, particularly younger people who can attract the youth vote. The prime minister has launched several programmes, including tweetups and last week's 1 Malaysia for Youth (1M4U) in the capital city, to bring the younger generation to his side.

"Najib is thorough. He is already eyeing one candidate from PEMANDU, and we are not talking about Idris Jala, to get more support," another source said, referring to the efficiency agency, Performance Management and Delivery Unit, headed by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Idris Jala. Jala is a senator but is not a member of any BN component party.

The Malaysian Insider reported yesterday that the Najib administration was looking at a snap election in September before Malaysia Day if it goes through with a plan to dissolve Parliament next month.

Sources said Najib's aides and BN officials have briefed a number of people on the plan to hold elections between Hari Raya Aidifitri, which falls on August 19, and the proposed Budget Day of September 28. Malaysia Day is on September 16.

But the prime minister, who is seeking his first personal mandate, had said on Saturday that BN had yet to finalise its candidates for the upcoming general election.

"The list will be finalised when the time comes. Everything else is just speculation," Najib had said when asked about report saying he had rejected half of the names submitted for the list.

Umno information chief Datuk Ahmad Maslan said yesterday the party has activated its 6,667 district polling centres across the country to strengthen its election machinery as elections are near.

PR parties have also predicted possible polls after the Aidilfitri festivities, with PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang saying BN was taking advantage of the possibility that voters would not return to their hometowns to cast their ballots so soon after the festive celebrations.

But PR sources said each party — PKR, PAS and the DAP — has already submitted preliminary lists to their leaders for the final selection.

“All party leaders have their lists and are going through them now. There are just a few seats that need to be swapped and that will be done when Parliament is dissolved,” a source told The Malaysian Insider.

A DAP source confirmed that there are a few new faces would be contesting in the general election although some veterans have indicated they want to stay on. “It is only natural because the 2008 victory has given confidence to many,” he added.

The Malaysian Insider learnt that PR’s federal seat allocation is 66 for PAS, 47 for the DAP and the rest for PKR including a few seats to be given to partners in Sabah and Sarawak. “We have to work with local parties in Borneo, so there will be some seats for them,” a PKR source said.

Nearly 13 million voters are eligible to cast their ballots if a general election is called involving all 222 federal seats and 505 seats in 12 states. However, the four PR-ruled states have yet to say if they will hold elections the same day as the general election as their mandates only expire next April. Sarawak has already had its state election last year.

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